Ezra

VOLUME 14A

THE ANCHOR YALE BIBLE is a project of international and interfaith scope in which Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish scholars from many countries contribute individual volumes. The project is not sponsored by any ecclesiastical organization and is not intended to reflect any particular theological doctrine.

THE ANCHOR YALE BIBLE is committed to producing commentaries in the tradition established half a century ago by the founders of the series, William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. It aims to present the best contemporary scholarship in a way that is accessible not only to scholars but also to the educated nonspecialist. Its approach is grounded in exact translation of the ancient languages and an appreciation of the historical and cultural contexts in which the biblical books were written, supplemented by insights from modern methods, such as sociological and literary criticism.

John J. Collins
General Editor

THE ANCHOR YALE BIBLE

Ezra

A New Translation With
Introduction and Commentary

TAMARA COHN ESKENAZI

YALE

THE ANCHOR YALE BIBLE

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS

New Haven & London

Published with assistance from the Louis Stern Memorial Fund.

Anchor Yale Bible® and the Anchor Yale Bible logo are registered trademarks of Yale University.

Copyright © 2023 by Yale University.

All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Yale University Press books may be purchased in quantity for educational, business, or promotional use. For information, please e-mail sales.press@yale.edu (U.S. office) or sales@yaleup.co.uk (U.K. office).

Set in Adobe Garamond type by Newgen North America.
Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022934866
ISBN 978-0-300-14969-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

I dedicate this volume to Mark G. Brett, David J. A. Clines, Sara Japhet, and Jacob L. Wright, whose presence in my life as friends and scholars has inspired and sustained me in writing this commentary. The work of these scholars and friends deeply infuses and shapes my own thinking in ways that are not sufficiently reflected in the conventional medium of footnotes. And their steadfast friendship remains a gift beyond compare. They have been a blessing for which I am most grateful.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Preface, xiii
Acknowledgments, xv
List of Abbreviations, xvii

INTRODUCTION, 1

I. A Brief Overview of Ezra-Nehemiah 3
II. The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE) 9
III. Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period 15
IV. Sources and Composition 24
V. The Unity of Ezra-Nehemiah 32
VI. The Theology of Ezra-Nehemiah 33
VII. A History of Interpretation 35
VIII. A Guide to the Commentary 44

BIBLIOGRAPHY, 47

TRANSLATION, 103

NOTES AND COMMENTS, 119

I. "To Build the House of YHWH": The Call and the Agenda of the Book (1:1–11) 121
Introduction and Structure 121
A. The Commissioning: God's Command and Cyrus's Decree (1:1–4) 122

Introduction 122
Notes 122
Comments 126
B. The People's Response (1:5–6) 132
Introduction 132
Notes 132
Comments 134
C. The Reclamation of the Temple Vessels (1:7–11) 136
Introduction and Structure 137
Notes 137
Comments 142
II. The List of Builders (2:1–70) 146
Introduction and Structure 146
A. Introduction and the List of Leaders (2:1–2a) 147
Introduction 148
Notes 148
B. The List of Israelites (2:2b–35) 154
Introduction 154
Notes 155
C. The Priests (2:36–39) 163
Introduction 163
Notes 163
Comments 165
D. Other Cult Personnel (2:40–58) 166
Introduction and Structure 166
Notes 167
E. Cases of the Undocumented (2:59–63) 176
Introduction 176
Notes 176
F. Summary, Conclusion, and Arrival (2:64–70) 183
Introduction 183
Notes 184
Comments (2:1–70) 188

III. Building YHWH's House,
Stage One: The Temple (3:1–6:22) 195
Introduction and Structure 195
A. Beginning the Work: Restoring the Altar and Cult and Founding the Temple (3:1–13) 196
Introduction and Structure 196
1. Restoring the Altar and Cult (According to the *torah* of Moses) (3:1–7) 196
Notes 197
Comments 204
2. Founding the Temple (3:8–13) 206
Notes 207
Comments 212
B. The Obstacle: Outsiders Impede Rebuilding the Temple (4:1–24) 213
Introduction and Structure 213
1. Interference by Foreign Adversaries (4:1–5) 214
Introduction 214
Notes 215
Comments 218
2. Three Examples of Foreign Interference (4:6–16) 220
Introduction and Structure 220
Notes 221
3. Results: Artaxerxes' Response Stops the Work (4:17–24) 234
Introduction and Structure 234
Notes 234
Comments (4:6–24) 237
C. Obstacles Overcome: Successful Rebuilding of the Temple (5:1–6:18) 243
Introduction and Structure 243

1. Renewed Building Activities and Inquiry (5:1–17) 243
Introduction and Structure 244
Notes 245
Comments 255
2. King Darius's Supportive Response (6:1–12) 258
Introduction and Structure 259
Notes 259
Comments 266
3. Results: The Temple and Its Cult Are Fully Restored (6:13–18) 269
Introduction and Structure 269
Notes 270
Comments 274
D. Celebrating the Conclusion of Stage One: Passover/Festival of the Unleavened Bread (6:19–22) 275
Introduction 276
Notes 276
Comments 280
IV. Building YHWH's House, Stage Two: The People (7:1–10:44) 283
Introduction and Structure 283
A. Introduction of Protagonists and Mission (7:1–8:14) 284
Introduction and Structure 284
1. The Narrator's Introduction of Ezra and His Mission (7:1–10) 284
Introduction 284
Notes 285
Comments 292
2. King Artaxerxes' Introduction of Ezra and His Mission (7:11–26) 296

Introduction and Structure 297
Notes 298
Comments 308
3. Ezra's Response to Artaxerxes' Letter (7:27–28) 313
Introduction 313
Notes 313
Comments 314
4. Ezra's Companions (8:1–14) 316
Introduction 317
Notes 317
Comments 323
B. Initial Implementation of the Task (8:15–36) 325
Introduction and Structure 325
1. Assembly and Recruiting of Levites (8:15–20) 326
Introduction 326
Notes 326
Comments 332
2. Final Preparations (8:21–30) 333
Introduction 333
Notes 334
Comments 342
3. Journey and Arrival in Jerusalem (8:31–36) 345
Introduction and Structure 345
Notes 345
Comments 350
C. The Obstacle: Marriages with the Peoples of the Lands (9:1–15) 353
Introduction and Structure 353
1. The Obstacle Discovered (9:1–2) 354
Introduction 354
Notes 354
2. Ezra's Response (9:3–15) 362

Introduction and Structure 363
Notes 364
Comments (9:1–15) 378
D. The Obstacle Overcome: The Community Resolves to Separate from Foreign Wives and Prohibit Exogamy (10:1–44) 390
Introduction and Structure 390
1. Communal Response and Shecaniah's Proposal (10:1–6) 391
Introduction 391
Notes 391
Comments 398
2. Communal Decision and Its Implementation (10:7–17) 400
Introduction and Structure 401
Notes 402
Comments 410
3. Results and Conclusion (10:18–44) 413
Introduction and Structure 414
Notes 414
Comments 423

Index of Subjects, 429
Index of Modern Authors, 438
Index of Ancient Sources, 444

Preface

My fascination with Ezra-Nehemiah was initially sparked by my teacher, mentor, and friend Kent H. Richards, whose seminar on the subject I took in 1980, and who urged me then to read Sara Japhet's 1977 book (in Hebrew) on Chronicles' ideology (published in English in 1989 as *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*). Japhet's book liberated the interpretation of Ezra-Nehemiah from Chronicles and made it possible and necessary to look at Ezra-Nehemiah with new eyes. My book *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah* (1988) was the consequence of my first encountering her work.

Ezra-Nehemiah, however, continued to hold my attention because its literary artistry, which combines so many voices, led me to new questions and to even greater appreciation of the book's historical significance. In depicting the reestablishment of a small nation upon its land after a disaster that forecasted extinction, Ezra-Nehemiah does more than preserve a selective memory of a pivotal period. The book masterfully crafts a new, resilient model of "peoplehood" (as Wright 2020 puts it)—one that enabled a small community not only to survive military assault but also to thrive, even under foreign domination. I wanted to understand better how and why these new foundations that Ezra-Nehemiah sets forth successfully sustained Jewish continuity for millennia. The fact that Ezra-Nehemiah's consolidation of society around scripture proved significant also for Christianity and Islam added to my fascination with the book.

As I continued to delve into the complex world that Ezra-Nehemiah describes, and from which it emerged, I became convinced that understanding Ezra-Nehemiah, and the ways it narrates the period's history, can shed important light on understanding the rest of the Hebrew Bible. After all, the Hebrew Bible was decisively shaped during this period, most likely with values and agendas similar to those that Ezra-Nehemiah reflects. I therefore watched with delight the growing scholarly appreciation of the significance of Ezra-Nehemiah and the blossoming of Persian-period studies during the past three decades.

It is my hope that readers of this commentary and its continuation in my forthcoming commentary on Nehemiah will be able to see with greater clarity what Ezra-Nehemiah discloses and why it is important. I also hope that future studies will use this commentary for a wide array of new and different investigations in order to further illumine the literature and history of the Bible in the Persian period.

Let me close with an anecdote: Deep into my work on the present volume, I discovered, with astonishment, that Mordekai Zer Kavod wrote a major commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah in Hebrew. Zer Kavod was my high school Bible teacher. To my knowledge, he never mentioned Ezra-Nehemiah to us. Yet I can't help but wonder about mysterious lines of connections from his work to my own interest in Ezra-Nehemiah, aware of the appreciation of the Bible that he instilled in me. Like many high school teachers in Israel of the 1950s, Zer Kavod was a refugee with a European doctorate, which had proved useless under Hitler. My generation benefited from such gifted immigrants. Let me then conclude by acknowledging with thanks those many teachers whose influence on future generations is sometimes imperceptible, and acknowledge especially the contributions that immigrants make in their new homelands, and the loss of those whose lives and gifts were cut short.

Acknowledgments

As noted in the Preface, my study of Ezra-Nehemiah began thanks to Kent H. Richards and Sara Japhet's book on Chronicles, which inspired my own study and approach. The wisdom and friendship of these two remarkable people continue to guide me.

The excellent 1980s commentaries on Ezra-Nehemiah by David Clines, Joseph Blenkinsopp, and Hugh Williamson set the study of Ezra-Nehemiah on a new, solid foundation. Furthermore, their distillation of earlier studies made it easier to build on their work and move forward. Conversations with those whose work on Ezra-Nehemiah has been significant—especially Mark Brett, David Clines, Liz Fried, the late Gary Knoppers, Oded Lipschits, Jacob Wright, and of course the continuing contact with Sara Japhet and Hugh Williamson—have been a persistent source of insight. Others working in the broader field of Persian-period studies have greatly enhanced my approach and helped me when I needed more information. These include Wouter Henkelman, Carol Meyers (who also first recommended that I write this commentary), Bezalel "Buzzy" Porten, Joseph Sievers, and Cornelia Wunsch. Dialogues with these friends and scholars made the work more joyous for me and more fruitful as well. Special thanks go to Maurya Horgan (from whom I learned much about the Qumran texts when I was still a grad student), for her meticulous transliteration.

I also thank several former students who have been a great help as research assistants: Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Rabbi Gavi Ruit, and Rabbi Suzanne Singer. Eric McDonnell has been indispensable in helping with the bibliography. Special thanks go to Abbie Storch of Yale University Press, who has guided the process gracefully and masterfully; to Jessie Dolch for her fine copyediting; and in particular to Yale production editor Susan Laity, whose exceptional care, skill, wisdom, and generosity proved a genuine blessing. I cannot imagine a better team.

This commentary would not have come into existence were it not for the two superb editors of the Anchor Yale Bible series. The late, legendary David Noel Freedman initially invited me to write this commentary. His famously detailed editorial

comments on early drafts and his zestful engagement were a blessing. So too are the insights and help of John Collins, who followed as editor and who has been crucial in bringing the volume to completion. John Collins's patience, gentle prodding, and quick responses made writing and completing this volume possible. In particular, his careful readings and rereadings, especially of challenging portions of the material, enabled me to present my work more clearly and, I hope, effectively. I look forward to his guidance as the Nehemiah volume unfolds. My gratitude is without measure.

My beloved family, wonderful family, deserves special thanks; my late husbands, my children, their spouses, and their children are all an integral part of this work and my journey: David Eskenazi, Bill Whedbee, Willa Eskenazi, Kay Eskenazi, Joanne Cohn, Martin White, Alex White, Naomi Eskenazi, Mike Eskenazi, Erika Eskenazi, Nicole Eskenazi, Devon Cohn, David Cohn, Andy Cohn, and Jeremiah Cohn. Their presence (re)makes the world beautiful every day.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary.* Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992 (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
ANE	ancient Near East, ancient Near Eastern
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament.* Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
Ant.	Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities.* Translated by R. Marcus. Books IX–XI. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.* Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BWANT	Beitrage zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beitrage zur Zeitschrift für die altestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.* Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.

CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
EN	Ezra-Nehemiah
ET	English translation
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
Hist.	Herodotus, *The Histories.* Translated by Robin Waterfield with an Introduction and Notes by Carolyn Dewald. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
K	Ketib; a reference to Masoretic scribal notations referring to how a word is written (in distinction from the Q)
KJV	King James Version
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NJPS	*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
Pelop.	Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian Wars.* Translated by Richard Crawley, with Introduction and Notes by Donald Lateiner. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2006.
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
Q	Qeri; a reference to Masoretic scribal notations referring to how a word is read (in distinction from the K)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
TAD	*Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt.* Vols. A–D. Edited and translated by B. Porten and A. Yardeni. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986–1999.
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum*
WDSP	*Wadi Daliyeh: The Samaria Papyri from Wadi Daliyeh.* Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 28. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

This page intentionally left blank

I.

A Brief Overview of Ezra-Nehemiah

To those who survived the fall of Judah in 587/586 BCE, King Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE signaled the dawn of a new era and their own nation's rebirth. Ezra-Nehemiah (EN) recounts this story of rebirth under Persian rule. The preceding Babylonian destruction and exile had irreversibly altered life in Judah. Secure structures were demolished (including the temple and the monarchy). Jerusalem was in ruins, countless people had died, and many, including leaders, were exiled. Survivors faced overwhelming challenges, having to rebuild not only their lives and homeland, but their very identity as a people.

The recovery of Judah during the Persian period remains one of history's great surprises. One would have expected the very memory of the kingdom of Judah to vanish without a trace, its people absorbed among the nations. Such was the fate of numerous ANE kingdoms and peoples, many of which (e.g., the kingdom of Ebla) have been discovered thanks to modern archaeology. Yet Judah and the Judeans not only survived; they created enduring legacies that continue to shape Judaism and Christianity, and to some extent Islam. The Hebrew Bible is a product of this recovery.

EN is preserved in all ancient sources as a single, unified book. As a carefully structured collage, it resembles what the poet Adrienne Rich (1981, 22) in her poem "For Memory" calls "freedom," describing it as "daily, prose-bound, routine remembering"—the gathering inch by inch of what has been lost. EN is a prose-bound book, even prosaic, gathering lost collections inch by inch and weaving them into a new model of community.

EN is the only book in the Hebrew Bible that expressly depicts the reconstruction of Judah and Jerusalem. It vividly traces communal recovery by describing the restoration of the temple, the people, and Jerusalem as a whole. Glimpses about this period can be culled from biblical books like Haggai and Zechariah, or Isaiah 56–66, but only EN gives a detailed account of what it construes as the defining events. The Hellenistic book of 1 Esdras, which parallels portions of EN, derives from it. No other ancient source describes these events.

Ezra 1–10, as preserved in all the ancient manuscripts, forms with Nehemiah 1–13 a single, unified book, now titled Ezra-Nehemiah. According to EN, King Cyrus of Persia, at God's command, commissioned the rebuilding of YHWH's house in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–4). EN describes how returning exiles, "Israel," carried out this task. In Ezra 1, Cyrus also returns the plundered temple vessels to Judean hands, entrusting them to Sheshbazzar, the Judean leader. The book's chief human protagonists are then introduced: the people as a whole (Ezra 2). The list of the names and numbers that follow claims that 42,360 members (Ezra 2:64) went to Judah and Jerusalem to rebuild YHWH's house, with leaders such as Zerubbabel and Jeshua the priest (Ezra 2:2). In Stage One, the people first (re)build the altar and the temple's foundations (Ezra 3). However, neighbors (apparently from Samaria) successfully put a stop to the work until King Darius's reign (Ezra 4; although some information in this section is out of chronological order, a coherent timeline follows in Ezra 5). At the urging of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and with the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the people resume work on the temple. They even receive support from King Darius (Ezra 5–6). They complete the temple's restoration in 516/515 BCE. Stage One of rebuilding concludes with celebrations (Ezra 6:14–22). Most of Ezra 4–6 is in Aramaic.

Stage Two begins with a new figure, Ezra, a scribe and priest possessing the highest credentials. With royal authorization from King Artaxerxes, Ezra, a *torah* ("teaching" or "law") expert, goes up to Jerusalem to teach, implement laws, and deliver gifts to the temple (Ezra 7, ca. 458 BCE, given the canonical sequence). After organizing a return and delivering the gifts (Ezra 8), Ezra in Jerusalem confronts what he deems a crisis: marriages of Judean men to women from "the peoples of the lands" (Ezra 9). At a public gathering, and at Ezra's urging, the community agrees to ban such marriages and separate from "the peoples of the land(s)." Ezra 10 lists the names of the 113 intermarried men. Four from the family of the leading priests consent to divorcing their foreign wives. The fate of the other families is not clear (see Notes at Ezra 10:44).

In its oldest extant versions, EN continues without interruption. Stage Three of Judah's reconstruction introduces Nehemiah, a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in Susa. In ca. 444 BCE, Nehemiah obtains royal permission to rebuild Jerusalem's wall (Neh 1–2) and inspires the Judeans to join his project (Neh 3). Although neighbors under the leadership of Sanballat consistently intimidate the workers, Nehemiah succeeds, restoring the wall in record time (fifty-four days!; Neh 5–6). Nehemiah also stops the wealthy from exploiting other Judeans (Neh 5). To further repopulate Jerusalem, he consults the list of predecessors (reproducing in Neh 7 a virtual copy of the list in Ezra 2).

Having restored the temple, the community, and Jerusalem's wall, the people celebrate (Neh 8–12). All gather around Ezra and the book of the *torah* to learn and implement the teachings (Neh 8) and to offer a long communal prayer that rehearses Israel's history (Neh 9). The people next sign a written communal pledge to observe the *torah* and support God's house (Neh 10). Jerusalem, now a consecrated city (*ʿîr haqōdeš* in Neh 11:1, 18), is further settled by volunteers (Neh 11). Joy-filled dedication ceremonies of Jerusalem's walls conclude the elaborate month-long festivities (Neh 12). The book ends with additional reforms, mostly by Nehemiah (Neh 13).

In narrating these events, EN emphasizes the role of the people as the chief human agents, the power of documents as sources of authority, and the expansion of sanctity from the temple to the community and to Jerusalem as a whole. In the background

stands the question: How does one survive after a catastrophe? EN is a theological and political interpretation of events and the response to them by a small, fragile community living under foreign imperial rule. Its model of distinct Judean identity is a response that both accommodates and resists imperial domination.

The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah

Japhet (1994) regards EN's structure as two-staged. The first stage (Ezra 1:1–6:15) depicts the building of the temple, from 538 to 517 BCE. The second stage (Ezra 7:7–Neh 13:6) depicts the era of Ezra and Nehemiah, from 458 to 432 BCE (ibid., 208; also Japhet 2019, 8–9). Each period is the work of a generation (twenty-two years for the temple and twenty-six for the rest), with two leaders at the helm (one of whom is a priest). The two stages are organized according to similar historical principles, concentrating on the beginning and end point (Japhet 1994, 210–11). Although the narrative diverges from the chronology of the relevant sources, it expresses the authors' interpretation of the history (ibid., 215).

The present commentary is based on a different understanding of EN's structure. I distinguish three stages of return and rebuilding: Ezra 3–6, Ezra 7–10, and Neh 1:1–7:5. Each stage identifies obstacles that the Judean community had to overcome and further refines the notion of Israel's identity; each stage enlarges the notion of what YHWH's house encompasses. The repeated list of "builders" (Ezra 2 // Neh 7) frames and unifies these three stages of rebuilding, highlighting the role of the people. Their celebration of YHWH's house follows (Neh 8–13). At the end, the restored house of YHWH encompasses the temple, the purified people (Neh 12:30), and the consecrated city (Neh 11:1) as a whole. The structure of EN is as follows:

I. "To build the house of YHWH": The call and the agenda of the book (Ezra 1:1–11)
  A. The commissioning: God's command and Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1:1–4)
  B. The people's response (Ezra 1:5–6)
  C. The reclamation of the temple vessels (Ezra 1:7–11)
II. Building YHWH's house (Ezra 2:1–Neh 7:72 [ET 73])
  A. The list of builders (Ezra 2:1–70)
  B. Building YHWH's house, Stage One: The temple (Ezra 3–6)
  C. Building YHWH's house, Stage Two: The people (Ezra 7–10)
  D. Building YHWH's house, Stage Three: Jerusalem's wall (Neh 1:1–7:5)
  E. The list of builders (repeated) (Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73]) // (Ezra 2:1–70)
III. Celebrating YHWH's house in Jerusalem (Neh 8:1–13:3)
  A. Ezra and the public reading of the book of the *torah* (Neh 8)
  B. Communal prayer and recitation of history (Neh 9)
  C. The communal pledge (Neh 10)
  D. Celebration and dedication (Neh 11:1–13:3)
IV. The concluding appendix (Neh 13:4–31)

Date, Authorship, Versions, and Canonical Settings

The earliest possible date for EN's final form is after 432 BCE, given Neh 13:6–7 (the date of Nehemiah's visit to the king and subsequent return to Jerusalem). Debates

concerning the book's date continue, however, depending on theories about its composition, as well as the date and historicity of Ezra himself. Assessments of Ezra's mission, whether in 458 BCE (under Artaxerxes I) or 398 BCE (under Artaxerxes II) influence the debates. Earlier generations supposed a late Persian-period date, but many scholars today extend the process of composition into the Hellenistic era, that is, after 332 BCE (Williamson 1985; Wright 2005; Fried 2015a, 4–5; Ben Zvi and Honigman 2018). These scholars recognize, however, that some of the book's constituent elements date earlier. For most of EN, I propose a date between 400 and 350 BCE, with some Hellenistic revisions.

As for Ezra himself, Torrey (1896, 1910) and Becking (2018), among others, deny his historicity. But Clines (1984), Williamson (1985), Blenkinsopp (1988), Fried (2015a), Yoo (2017), and Japhet (2019) regard Ezra as a historical figure, without claiming that the Ezra narrative is an accurate portrait. I share this latter conclusion, but the interpretation of EN in the present commentary does not depend on the historicity of Ezra.

EN is explicitly a multiauthored work, combining the writings of various individuals (and groups), including an "Ezra Memoir," a "Nehemiah Memoir," royal correspondence, and lists. Scholars attribute the combining of these sources to a range of possible editors/authors, including Ezra himself, his associate(s), Levites, or scribes (see below). According to rabbinic traditions Ezra wrote the book but Nehemiah completed it (b. B. Bat. 15b). Modern scholars attribute the final form of the book to either anonymous priests, Levites (Min 2004), or scribes (Wright 2005).

The earliest extant manuscripts of EN are the Greek versions of the LXX *Esdras Beta.* They closely correspond to the MT of the Leningrad Codex and the Aleppo Codex, the earliest extant complete Hebrew/Aramaic versions (tenth century CE). Very few fragments were found at Qumran (4Q117): Ezra 4:2–6, 5:17, and 6:1–6. A claimed Nehemiah fragment (MS 5426) is now considered a forgery (see Davis, Rubin, and Feldman et al. 2017, 221–25). The Hellenistic 1 Esdras (*Esdras Alpha*), which includes a version of Ezra 1–10 and Neh 8:1–13a, presupposes a form of EN similar to that in the MT.

A rabbinic tradition places EN, designated as "Ezra," between Esther and Chronicles, the last book in the Ketuvim/Writings section of the Hebrew Bible (b. B. Bat. 14b). But the Leningrad Codex, the earliest full version of the Hebrew Bible available, places EN (as one book) last, following Daniel (with Chronicles as first in the section now called Ketuvim/Writings). *BHS,* however, transferred Chronicles to the final position and placed EN before it. Modern Jewish Bibles, such as the NJPS, likewise place EN in the penultimate position, before Chronicles. An early Christian list by Melito (ca. 170 CE) places the Prophets as the last major section of the Old Testament, but this is then followed by EN as *Esdras Beta* (Goswell 2009, 451).

The Greek translation of EN was probably composed in the second century BCE. Manuscripts of the LXX place EN (as *Esdras Beta*) among the historical books. EN follows Chronicles in Codex Sinaiticus, but a lacuna makes it difficult to determine whether it follows it directly. The order in Codex Vaticanus is Chronicles, 1 Esdras, and EN. In Codex Alexandrinus, Chronicles precedes the Prophets and EN follows the Prophets. The order includes Judith, 1 Esdras, EN, and the four books of the Maccabees.

The Vulgate places EN with the historical books before the Prophets, in the following order: Chronicles (as 1 and 2 Paralipomenon), Ezra (1 Esdrae), Nehemiah (2 Esdrae), and Tobit.

Modern Christian Bibles distinguish two books, "Ezra" and "Nehemiah," in the final section of the historical books that follow the Pentateuch. The order in Catholic Bibles is Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Tobit (interestingly, however, the heading in the Catholic Jerusalem Bible of 1966 reads "The Book of Ezra and Nehemiah" before the subheading "Ezra"). The order in the KJV, NRSV, and New English Bible is Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

Style and Language

EN's style is typically prosaic, often bureaucratic. Yet its relative austerity is not bereft of emotions (Nehemiah's feelings, for example, are palpable in the Nehemiah Memoir, as is the people's joy in Ezra 3:11–13). The syntax is sometimes awkward or inelegant; this commentary's translation reproduces this feature.

The language is primarily Late Biblical Hebrew. But EN also includes a large Aramaic section (Ezra 4–7), seemingly of official documents. Late Biblical Hebrew contains several distinctive features and typifies the books of Chronicles, Esther, and Daniel as well. For example, in Late Biblical Hebrew syntax, the subject often appears before the verb (e.g., Ezra 1:6) instead of the more common verb–subject word order in Classical Biblical Hebrew.

The Hebrew in EN shows the influence of Aramaic, as in the use of *'al,* which in Classical Hebrew means "on" or "about" but in Persian-period Aramaic can also interchange with *'el* ("to"). The Hebrew perfect more frequently denotes past events and the imperfect non-past events, coinciding with the absence of *wayyiqtol* forms. Comparing tense patterns in Biblical Hebrew with those in Biblical Aramaic, J. A. Cook (2019, 8) observes that Biblical Aramaic resembles Biblical Hebrew in its verbal system but "drifts" more toward tense-prominence.

EN includes an increase of participles (e.g., "was mourning" in Ezra 10:6), as does Biblical Aramaic (J. A. Cook, 2019, 9–10). It uses the *waw* primarily as a conjunction. Additionally, EN widely uses the *'eqtala/niqtala* forms as parallel to the *'eqtal/niqtal.* See, for example, *wannāṣûmâ,* "and we fasted" (Ezra 8:23); *wā'abdîlâ,* "and I separated" (8:24); and *wā'ešqālâ,* "and I weighed" (8:26). This form is prevalent in the Ezra Memoir and the Nehemiah Memoir, appearing about fifty times (Japhet 2019, 16). Japhet (ibid., 16–18) discerns this feature also in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Qumran, but not in Chronicles (see also O. Cohen 2013).

The Aramaic in Ezra has been subject to close analysis. While it is generally acknowledged that the Aramaic in Ezra is earlier than that of Daniel, the date of the material is difficult to assess, given the incorporation of loan words from Akkadian, Hebrew, and Old Persian (J. A. Cook 2019, 1–2). According to Cook (ibid., 1), Biblical Aramaic in Ezra 4–7 belongs to imperial or "official" Aramaic between 600 and 200 BCE. It is distinguishable from that of Daniel, which belongs to the early middle Aramaic period (200 BCE to 200 CE). Grabbe (2006, 557–58) notes that several loan words, such as *ginzaya,* "treasure" or "treasury" (Ezra 5:17, 6:1, 7:20), continue in Late Aramaic, while

others, such as the Persian loan word *asparna,* "diligently" (5:8; 6:8, 12, 13; 7:17, 21, 26), do not, thereby signaling Persian-period sources.

For a full discussion of EN's linguistic features, see Japhet 2019, 14–18. For the Aramaic, see Schwiderski 2000 and the discussion in the Comments at Ezra 4–6 (especially 4:6–24) below. For the dates, see "IV. Sources and Composition" below.

Genre

As its location in Christian Bibles indicates, EN belongs with the historical books. Like other biblical histories, it does not conform to modern notions of historical writing or attempts to be impartial. Ancient historical writings were typically didactic in nature. Herodotus and Thucydides actually disclose this as their goal in the first pages of their histories, as does 2 Macc 2:23–32. EN, however, differs dramatically from other biblical and classical histories by using embedded documents extensively. (Thucydides [*Pelop.* 1.22] privileges firsthand witness reports.) In this sense, EN is a precursor of modern historical writings, which cite documents, often in footnotes, to establish veracity and reliability. The documents in EN are combined to produce a continuous narrative, albeit with some disjunctions. EN's composite nature is one of its most obvious features.

Carlson-Hasler (2020, 1) considers EN an archive, designating the genre as "archival historiography," whereas Steiner (2006) regards only the Aramaic sources in Ezra 4–6 as a form of archive. To Carlson-Hasler (ibid., 48–49), EN as an archival space represents a response to lost space, documents, and memory. She interprets this archival form as politically motivated, with the appropriation of the imperial model of archives expressing power and control. Like Brett (2016, 2019), Carlson-Hasler emphasizes trauma as a driving force that shapes EN.

Buster (2016) highlights the retrieval of memory through documentation as a search for a usable past in the process of producing a written cultural memory (cf. Ben Zvi's [2019] "social memory"). She links investment in written records to the need to establish legitimacy when traditional communal witnessing no longer functions.

EN not only emulates the archival practices of the empire, as Carlson-Hasler suggests; it also creates something new: a portable archive independent of fixed spaces such as palatial treasure houses. This portable archive preserves different voices as collective memory. In addition to establishing legitimacy via documentation, the portable archive of reproduced documents that form EN enables a diversity of "authors" (of memoirs, letters, anonymous reports) to coexist as distinct voices while simultaneously unifying them into an integrated narrative. On the genre of the distinct units, see the Notes and Comments at the relevant sections.

II.

The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE)

A History of the Persian Empire

The reconstruction of Judean life in the land owes much to favorable conditions and specific developments under Persian rule. The Persian Empire unified vast areas, from India to Egypt, Turkey, and beyond (fig. 1). It brought the "East" (Asia) and the "West" (Europe), as well as Africa, into unprecedented contact through war and commerce, leading to cross-fertilization on multiple levels. Conventionally reckoned from King Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE, this Persian, or Achaemenid, Empire was ruled primarily by dynastic kings from the Achaemenid family (named after a legendary ancestor). The empire's end came when Alexander of Macedon ("the Great") defeated King Darius III, ca. 332 BCE.

The Persian Empire was seen for centuries through the eyes of the Greek historians of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, especially Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides, and the more questionable Ctesias, who claimed to have lived in the Persian court. In modern times, excavations at chief imperial cities such as Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis have revealed a plethora of diverse archaeological finds that immeasurably increase reliable information for the period. These finds include tens of thousands of Persepolis tablets (Henkelman 2017), the Murashu "banking" records (Stolper 1985), Babylonian tablets (Jursa 2010; Pearce and Wunsch 2014), Aramaic documents from Elephantine in Egypt (Porten 1968; *TAD*), and documents from Bactria (Naveh and Shaked 2012). Studies of these countless primary sources have modified earlier perceptions of the empire, but for the most part they confirm former historical outlines (see, e.g., Briant (1996 [ET 2002]; Kuhrt 2007; Henkelman 2017; Jursa 2010; Waerzeggers 2010). For a comprehensive list of sources, see Kuhrt 2007, 890–909; see also Grabbe 2004, 22–130).

King Cyrus (559–530 BCE) founded the Persian Empire by leading the Persians to rapid victory over Media, Elam, Lydia, and Babylonia. EN credits him with authorizing the building of God's house in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–4, 5:11–6:5; see also Isa 44:28, 45:1–7, which titles Cyrus "God's anointed"). Extant sources, including Herodotus and Xenophon, praise Cyrus despite the subsequent wars between Persia and Greece.

Cyrus's military victories are remembered alongside policies that set the stage for religious tolerance and support for indigenous cultures and traditions. The Cyrus Cylinder (ca. 538–530 BCE) claims that Cyrus, commissioned by the Babylonian god Marduk, conquered Babylon without a battle and liberated its inhabitants from their erratic Babylonian king (lines 15–18). It declares that Cyrus restored sanctuaries and enabled various conquered groups of exiles to return to their homelands (lines 31–33;

Fig. 1. The Persian/Achaemenid Empire, ca. 500 BCE (cartography by Gerry Krieg, 2021).

Caspian Sea
Media
Ecbatana
Bactria
Empire
Susa
Persepolis
Persia
Persian Gulf
India
Arabian Sea

Briant 2002, 31–106; Kuhrt 2007, 47–103). EN credits him with such a policy for Judah (e.g., Ezra 1:1–4, 6:2–5).

Cyrus's son Cambyses II (530–522 BCE), who does not appear in EN, conquered Egypt (525 BCE) but died young. Egypt, a great resource for the Persian Empire, increased imperial preoccupation with the western portion of the empire (Herodotus, *Hist.* II.1–32, III.1–67; Kuhrt 2007, 104–34).

Darius I (522–486 BCE) seized the suddenly vacant throne, defeating other contenders. King Darius features prominently in Ezra 5–6 as the king whose support enabled the temple to be built in 520–516/515 BCE.

Darius's monumental multilanguage Behistun Inscription, carved on a rocky mountain cliff, records the many enemies Darius vanquished before securing his reign. Copies of the inscription were distributed during his lifetime and even were preserved in Elephantine, Egypt. Babylonian tablets reflect economic instability accompanying Darius's ascent to the throne until his reign was secured in 520 BCE.

Herodotus credits Darius with reorganizing the administration of the empire, but modern studies show that he essentially extended Babylonian administrative protocols effectively, establishing a well-organized imperial administration and a dynasty that endured for two hundred years (Briant 2002, 139–511).

King Darius's attempts to conquer Greece failed, most famously in the battle of Marathon (490 BCE). Continuing attempts by the Persians to subjugate Greece rendered the Mediterranean region an imperial focal point. Formerly at the empire's periphery, the Levant became, instead, a strategic front line for control over Egypt and for access to the sea and its adjacent regions (Herodotus, *Hist.* III.68–VII.4; Briant 2002, 165–301; Kuhrt 2007, 135–237).

King Ahasuerus, Darius's son (Xerxes in Greek sources; 486–465 BCE) makes a cameo appearance in EN (Ezra 4:6); however, the book of Esther features him prominently as impetuous, a lover of lavish parties easily susceptible to manipulation. Greek sources cast Xerxes as despotic and impious, foolishly resuming "the Persian Wars" with Greece. His defeat at Salamis (480 BCE) signaled the end of Persia's military intervention in Greece. The Persian Wars served as an impetus for the Greek city-states to unite and for the formation of the Athenian Empire (Herodotus, *Hist.* VII.5–IX.122; Briant 2002, 515–68; Kuhrt 2007, 238–309).

King Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) took the throne in the midst of intrigue following the assassination of his father Ahasuerus (Xerxes). He features extensively in EN. Extrabiblical sources show that Artaxerxes I concentrated on securing stability rather than expansion. The Roman Plutarch (46–122 CE) describes Artaxerxes as "preeminent among the kings of Persia for gentleness and magnanimity" (*Lives,* "Artaxerxes" 1.1). Significant regional events during his reign include the Egyptian revolt of Inaros against Persian rule, aided by Athens (ca. 460–454 BCE; Thucydides, *Pelop.* VII.7; Briant 2002, 573), and the "Peace of Callias" (ca. 450 BCE), regarded as a formal conclusion to the Persian Wars with Greece (on the Peace of Callias, see Diodorus XII.4.4–5; Briant 2002, 579–82). The peace agreement enabled Artaxerxes to cultivate loyalty through diplomatic and economic means rather than war. He supported the Spartans in the Peloponnesian Wars with Athens (beginning 431 BCE; Briant 2002, 569–611; Kuhrt 2007, 310–31).

In EN, the missions of both Ezra and Nehemiah take place during the reign of an Artaxerxes. Scholars concur that Nehemiah came during Artaxerxes I's reign, but they debate whether Ezra also came during his reign or that of Artaxerxes II (405–358 BCE). Support for Judah's reconstruction, while not documented outside of EN, fits well within Artaxerxes I's policies (see "III. Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period" below).

Artaxerxes' son, Darius II (424–405 BCE), does not appear in EN except perhaps in a passing reference in Neh 12:22. However, Elephantine documents from Egypt, dated in his reign, shed significant light on Judean life (esp. *TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30, dated 407 BCE; Briant 2002, 569–611; Kuhrt 2007, 331–46).

King Artaxerxes II (405–358 BCE), the longest reigning Persian monarch, took the throne after defeating his brother Cyrus II (a story immortalized in Xenophon's *The Persian Expedition*). During his reign, Egypt successfully rebelled against Persia and remained independent until 345 BCE, despite several Persian attempts to reclaim it sooner. The loss of Egypt meant repeated military campaigns in the region, with Persia and Egypt competing for control of the coastal cities of the Levant (Briant 2002, 612–81; Kuhrt 2007, 347–405; Lehmann 2014). The impact of this conflict on Judah can be surmised but remains undocumented. A significant number of scholars date Ezra's mission (Ezra 7–10) to the reign of this Artaxerxes. EN was possibly composed or compiled during this period.

King Artaxerxes III (358–338 BCE) reconquered Egypt (Kuhrt 2007, 406–17). King Darius III (336–330 BCE) lost the empire in his battle with Alexander of Macedon (Briant 2002, 817–72; Kuhrt 2007, 418–56). Conceivably, Neh 12:22 refers to this Darius (not Darius II).

The two centuries of Persian rule represent a *Pax Persica* in the region, with a largely peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnicities, religions, and nationalities. Imperial rule facilitated international communication, with Aramaic as the administrative lingua franca. Persia's wars with Greece generated a cultural and economic cross-fertilization between Asia and Europe and stimulated the growth of Athens, whose political and cultural flowering in the fifth century BCE coincides with the events narrated in EN.

Persia's wars with Greece and Egypt also turned the Mediterranean into a major arena for conflict and commerce. Coastal cities near Judah, including Sidon, Tyre, Dor, Ashkelon, and Gaza, became thriving military and economic centers. The return of exiled Judeans to their homeland could have been inspired in part by the promise of new opportunities resulting from these regional developments. At the same time, recurring rebellions in Egypt, especially under Artaxerxes I and Artaxerxes II, meant military activities in which the coastal route and the southern route (controlled by Idumeans and Arabs) became of vital importance to the empire. Although EN is essentially silent about the impact of these geopolitical events on Judah, these regional developments nevertheless constitute the historical backdrop of EN's narrative.

The Persian Administration

Modern research has dramatically reshaped the picture of the Persian Empire. Classical Greek sources largely portray the empire as effete, luxurious, corrupt, and declining in

the fourth century BCE. But we know now, thanks to the work of Briant, Henkelman, Jursa, Kuhrt, Stolper, Waerzeggers, and Wunsch, that the Persians had successfully built a robust economy with a sophisticated administration that spanned great geographical and temporal distances.

From the time of King Darius I, the empire possessed a well-organized administration, largely based on earlier Babylonian patterns but now reaching farther beyond the center to the periphery. While Persia's population was relatively small compared with that of its vast territories, effective administration allowed Persia to rule successfully. The empire was divided into satrapies (so Herodotus) or *dayeva* (so Darius's Behistun Inscription), with hierarchical bureaucracies reaching into the lower strata of socioeconomic and judicial structures. Satrapies were subdivided into provinces or (as with Tyre and Sidon) kingdoms. The satrap, sometimes titled *peḥâ,* governor, was usually a member of the Persian royal family, although the title *peḥâ* was used for local governors as well (see, e.g., *TAD* A 4.7.1–2 // Cowley 30). Local nobility and talented people could rise in the administration, for example, Hanani, presumably a Judean, named in the Elephantine papyri (*TAD* A 6.2.23 // Cowley 26), and Udjahorresnet in Egypt (Blenkinsopp 1987).

The Persian bureaucratic network, which spanned thousands of miles, shows a high degree of standardization (see Henkelman 2017) and precision. Ship lists from Elephantine, for example, itemize cargo with astonishing details; the Persepolis tablets record the minutiae of rations to workers. Many of the tens of thousands of such records, including of tributes and taxes (in coins and in kind), are only now being transcribed and translated (see Briant 2002, Jursa 2009, Pearce and Wunsch 2014, Henkelman 2017).

All regions of the empire were linked by a vast and efficient transportation system over land and water, including a forerunner of today's Suez Canal under Darius I. These routes secured the smooth flow of provisions and personnel. But the unifying system also allowed for regional and local diversity. The Persian Empire thus was multicultural, multiethnic, and multinational (for a review of the Achaemenid imperial organization and issues such as tributes, taxes, routes and communication networks, production, settlements, and patterns of unity and diversity, see Kuhrt 2007, 696–878).

Documents from Elephantine in Egypt reflect the many dimensions of life under Persian rule at a distance from the royal court. They show an administration of local affairs that was sensitive to the particularities of diverse populations. Religious toleration and ethnic diversity enabled groups to maintain, even cultivate, their distinct traditions and lifestyles, resulting in a surprising degree of stability and continuity. At Elephantine, an Egyptian temple and a Judean temple stood side by side under the auspices of the Persian satrap Arsames. Military units included Judeans, Arameans, and Egyptians. Marriage between Judeans and Egyptians took place, as did trade. These activities were legitimated by local traditions. Persian authorities were typically enlisted only at times of conflict (e.g., *TAD* A 4.54 // Cowley 27). Both of these phenomena—the effective overarching superstructures (or infrastructures) and flexibility "on the ground," with toleration of local particularities (religious, social, and economic)—can be supposed as well for Judah under Persian rule. They would have contributed to the success of the reconstruction in Judah. At the same time, the Elephantine letters also document local tension among groups, occasionally erupting in violence (as when Egyptians destroyed

the Judean temple; see *TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30). Such local conflicts can be seen in EN as well (Ezra 4; Neh 4, 6).

III.
Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period

Persian-period Judah, named "Yehud" in Aramaic and extrabiblical sources, replaced the kingdom of Judah that had been destroyed in 587/586 BCE by the Babylonians. Considerably smaller than the former kingdom, it belonged to "Across-the-River" (*'abar nahara* in Ezra 4:16), the satrapy/province that included the Levant (modern-day Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Gaza, and portions of Syria). Persian-period Judah measured 1,318 square kilometers (521 square miles), which, as Fried (2015a, 14) points out, is about one-third the size of Rhode Island. It bordered Samaria to the north, the coastal plains to the west, Idumea to the south, and Ammon and Moab to the east across the Jordan River and Dead Sea (fig. 2).

Biblical accounts of the devastating destruction of Judah by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25; Jer 39, 52) largely correspond to historical and archaeological records. But biblical and extrabiblical information about the exile that followed, and about Judah in the subsequent Persian period (beginning in 538 BCE), is limited. EN offers the only detailed description of the recovery that followed, and some information from Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah 56–66, and Malachi supplements its account. Accumulated sources offer no compelling reasons to dismiss the reliability of EN's basic narrative outline, with restoration launched largely by Babylonian returnees with Persian support, prompting mixed reactions from those in the land. Nor are there compelling reasons to deny the historicity of figures such as Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah galvanizing national and religious sentiments around shared Judean traditions.

Even so, the historical reliability of specific details is difficult to assess. As the Notes illustrate, EN's depiction is partial, embellished, and partisan, representing the agenda of certain groups in tension with others. While often credible, it also conflicts with some archaeological evidence and with likely social, economic, and religious developments. Additionally, although EN's depictions fit well within Persian imperial policies, its estimates of Persian royal support defy credibility and can be taken only as retrospective idealization. Recovery was considerably slower and on a much smaller scale than EN depicts (my future volume on Nehemiah will offer a thorough reconstruction of Judah's history during this period).

Ezra 2:64 // Neh 7:66 refers to more than 42,360 people coming to Judah during the Persian period. Archaeology, however, shows no signs of such a dramatic population influx. Urban sites did not recover until the Hellenistic period, and the land remained

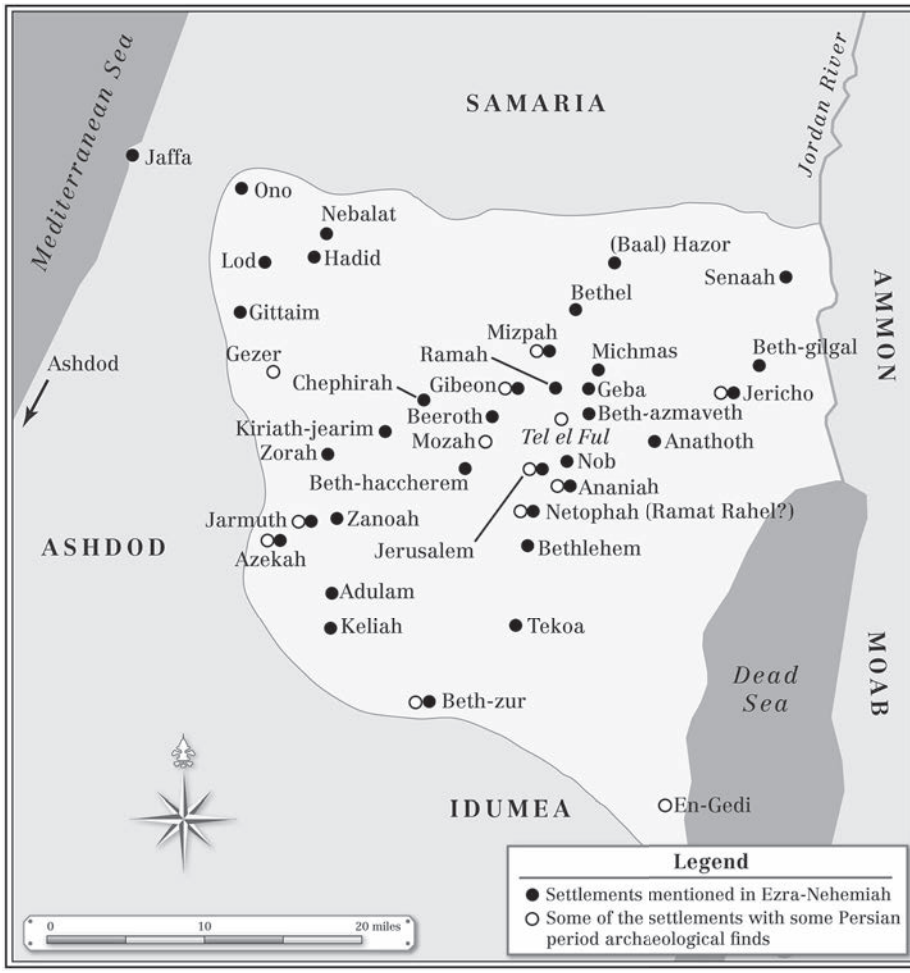

Fig. 2. The province of Judah/Yehud, mid-fifth century BCE (cartography by Gerry Krieg, 2021).

sparsely populated, with the majority of sites being small farmsteads (Edelman 2007; Lipschits 2011b; Finkelstein 2011; Faust 2013). Jerusalem itself shows no clear architectural remains from the Persian period.

How many people lived in Judah, then, during the Persian period? No scholar today regards 42,360 as a plausible number of "returnees." While calculations for the size of Judah's population fluctuate widely, even the highest current estimates for any one time fall short of EN's number. Lipschits (2011b, 57–90, 78) estimates 40,000 survivors in Judah after the Babylonian destruction. Faust (2007, esp. 43; 2012, 168–80, esp. 169), reckoning Judah in the late sixth century BCE as a "post collapse society," assumes survivors comprised 10 percent or at most 20 percent of the earlier population, considerably less than Lipschits's estimates.

Surveys, excavations, and environmental considerations lead Carter (1999, 201) to estimate approximately 13,350 people in Judah before 458 BCE, and 20,650 after. Lipschits (2006, 32–33) reckons that a few thousand came from the diaspora, arriving in three waves and representing elite families. Becking (2006, 9–10) reckons with at most 4,000 repatriated Judeans.

There is no way to determine how many in the land were in fact Judeans. Given mobility within the Persian Empire, one can expect some diversity in any community. For instance, ostraca from Idumea (south of Judah, and including portions of preexilic Judah), with mostly Arab names, include 6 percent Yahwistic and 6 percent Phoenician names (Lemaire 2015; Porten and Yardeni 2018). Edelman (2007, 54) identifies some influx by examining surveys and archaeological records for the Persian period, but since the settlements she lists were mostly small farmsteads, they could not add up to a "mass return" (see also Lipschits 2006, 32–34).

Nehemiah 11:1–19 records some 3,044 newly settled residents in Jerusalem in the mid-fifth century BCE, representing 10 percent of the population. According to this calculation, the total for the province adds up to about 30,440 (so Lipschits 2005, 161–62).

As for Jerusalem, the site remained an impoverished cult center throughout the Persian period (Lipschits 2003; 2006, 26–34), with no more than either a few hundred residents, mostly cult personnel (Finkelstein 2008), or perhaps as many as 1,500 (Carter 1999, 201; Lipschits 2006, 32). Persian-period settlements in Jerusalem were confined to narrow segments of the earlier city, judging from the very limited Persian-period remains; this area included the northern section of the City of David (Finkelstein 2008). Jerusalem's size would have been 2 to 2.5 hectares (Finkelstein 2011, 1–11, esp. 11) or 2.8 to 3 hectares (Lipschits 2009, 19–20). Zevit (2009) contests such low estimates, but Finkelstein (2009) effectively challenges his objections. Ussishkin's (2006, 162) claim that Persian-period Jerusalem encompassed the entire area surrounded by Jerusalem's wall in the seventh century BCE has not persuaded many. As noted, however, Nehemiah 11 tabulates the added population to Jerusalem in 444 BCE as 3,044, although it is difficult to determine whether the number represents Jerusalem's entire population or only new residents.

Lipschits (2011a, 190 n. 19) addresses the scant architectural remains in Persian-period Jerusalem, including the absence of signs of Nehemiah's wall. He plausibly suggests that builders reused much of the material from the Iron Age. Alternatively, he suggests that Persian-period material was thoroughly reused in the intensive rebuilding during the Hellenistic period, hampering its identification as Persian-period remains (ibid., 193).

The main archaeological evidence from Jerusalem are administrative seals and bullae that increase in number in the late Persian period, suggesting that Jerusalem only gradually and late regained administrative importance (see below). One can therefore accept the widely held conclusion that Persian-period Jerusalem was mainly a cultic center, inhabited mostly by temple personnel.

Four archaeological sources, however, yield additional information about Judah:

1. Excavations of different sites (see specifics in Notes to Ezra 2), including a string of large structures along the southern and western peripheries of Judah. Hoglund

(1992, esp. 165–205) interprets these structures as defensive forts, a sign of military investment in Judah in response to Egypt; but Faust (2018, 34–59), more convincingly, suggests that they constitute remains of agricultural estates with storage for supplies and taxation.

2. Ramat Rahel (some 4 kilometers from Jerusalem), a very large and luxurious building complex with a garden, where hundreds of administrative seals and bullae were found. It is now thought that this site (about which EN is essentially silent) served as the imperial administrative and economic center for Judah, and possibly the residence of the governor (Lipschits, Gadot, and Langgut 2012).
3. Large agricultural installations in the Valley of the King/Rephaim Valley near Jerusalem and Ramat Rahel. These suggest continuous food production on a "commercial" scale before, during, and after the fall of Jerusalem, maintained during the Persian period (Gadot 2015).
4. Hundreds of seals, seal impressions, and jar handles. The Persian-period seals and seal impressions are among the most valuable sources for discerning some of Judah's history; so too are jar handles and other pottery shards (647 according to Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2020, 194–95). Most of those stamped "Yehud" (YHWD or YHD) (372 of them), the Aramaic, official name of Judah, come from Ramat Rahel, with "Jerusalem" in second place (163). Together these two sites constitute more than 80 percent of all such stamps (Lipschits 2011a).

From the early period (sixth to fifth centuries BCE) there are 165 seals and seal impressions from Ramat Rahel and 17 from Jerusalem. From the middle period (fourth to third centuries BCE), there are 338 from Ramat Rahel and 59 from Jerusalem. From the late period (second century BCE), there are 144 from Ramat Rahel and 80 from Jerusalem (Lipschits 2011a; Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2020, 194–95).

This evidence points to Ramat Rahel, not Jerusalem, as the important administrative center during the Persian period. But it also shows a definite increase in Jerusalem's administrative role over time.

Persian-period seal impressions preserve several names of Judah's governors otherwise unknown: seven have "Yehud, Yeho'ezer the governor," with five from Ramat Rahel (Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2011, 192–201); eighteen have "belonging to Ahiab governor," with nine from Jerusalem and seven from Ramat Rahel (ibid., 83–106). Others mention Ahzai and Elnathan (Williamson 1988b; Grabbe 2004, 148–49). A Judean seal "Shelomith maidservant of Elnathan the governor" may refer to Shelomith, sister of Zerubbabel, of David's lineage in 1 Chr 3:19 (see Notes at Ezra 8:10). Coins mention "Yeḥezqiah the governor" and "Yehoḥanan the priest" (Stern 1982, 365–66; Fried 2003b). But only Governor Bagohi can be securely dated, given his name in a letter from Elephantine, Egypt, dated 407 BCE (*TAD* A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30; see also "Bigvai" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a).

The evidence points to the following probable history: Some discernible Judean reconstruction began with the founding of the temple (in 520 BCE) and its completion (516/515 BCE), as Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra 5–6 indicate. Increased activities followed in mid-fifth century BCE with Nehemiah's mission. Some religious or cultural consolidation took place either with Ezra in ca. 458 BCE as EN claims or decades later if 398 BCE counts as the reliable date for Ezra's mission. It is difficult to deter-

mine whether cultural consolidation led to intensified rebuilding or resulted from it. Reconstruction throughout the Persian period was slow, gaining genuine momentum only in the Hellenistic period. Ramat Rahel was the Persian administrative center, with Jerusalem gaining prominence only slowly and late. The future volume on Nehemiah will more fully discuss the history and Judah's governors.

Judeans, Judahites, or Jews?

How best to refer to those whom EN considers "the people" or "Israel"? The answer is not so simple. The term "Jews," used conventionally for this period, is problematic. The Hebrew word *yĕhûdîm* (plural of *yĕhûdî*), the Aramaic *yĕhûdāyē',* and the Greek *Ioudaious* (see the LXX) have several meanings: residents of the kingdom or province of Judah, descendants of the patriarch Judah, and members of the tribe of Judah. The Hebrew and Aramaic terms are typically translated as "Jews" (NJPS, KJV, NRSV; Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988).

S. J. D. Cohen (1999, 104) has criticized the widespread use of "Jews" for *yĕhûdîm* in the pre-Hellenistic era. As he observes, *yĕhûdîm* applied generally to those who hailed from Judah. It was an ethnic or geographic term. "In contrast," he points out, "'Jew' (at least in English) is a religious term: a Jew is someone who venerates the God of the Judeans, the God whose temple is in Jerusalem. . . . 'Jew,' then, denotes culture, a way of life, or 'religion,' not ethnic or geographic origin" (ibid., 105); it is therefore misleading (he says) to use the term "Jew" before the second century BCE (ibid., 104).

S. N. Mason (2007, 457) also calls attention to the problems of terminology. However, he concludes that "the *Ioudaioi* were understood until late antiquity as an ethnic group comparable to other ethnic groups, with their distinctive laws, traditions, customs, and God. They were indeed Judaeans." Recent scholars alternate between using "Jews," "Judahites," "Yehudites," or (as in this commentary) "Judeans" when referring to the community that EN represents.

Ezra 1–10 uses only the Aramaic *yĕhûdāyē,* and only in the Aramaic section (chs. 4–6). In Ezra 4:12 it designates those coming from the diaspora. The term *yĕhûdîm* does not appear in the Ezra narrative (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8), possibly because it applies with equal justification to some of the "peoples of the land(s)" from whom Ezra 7–10 seeks to separate (see Ezra 9–10); possibly, as well, the term is not used because Ezra concentrates on the *gôlâ* community to which he most directly belongs. Ezra's preferred term is "Israel" (e.g., 10:10). The Nehemiah Memoir uses the plural *yĕhûdîm* in Hebrew for those in the land (Neh 1:2, 2:16; 3:33–34; 4:6; 5:1, 8, 17; 6:6; 13:23).

Some Babylonian tablets with Yahwistic names refer to a town called Al Yahudu ("Judah-town") in Babylonia, indicating Judeans in exile (see "Judeans in Babylonia" below). The Elephantine papyri from Egypt illustrate that Judeans living in Egypt referred to themselves as *yĕhûdāyē* well over a century after settling in Egypt (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30). Many names in that Elephantine community are Yahwistic (i.e., including a reference to Israel's God), such as Mibtahiah, Hananiah, and Shem'ayah.

Like Cohen, I consider the term "Jews" to be anachronistic when translating EN's *yĕhûdîm.* In my view, however, Cohen's definition of "Jews" best describes what "Israel" signifies in EN. Unlike Cohen, then, I perceive a Persian-period (not only Hellenistic) development of this identification, with EN articulating and defining this emerging

notion of "Israel." The values embedded in the reformation and reconstruction that EN advocates, including the role of the *torah,* suggest that EN's goal is to trace, and shape, the development of Judeans (members of the tribe sharing history and/or geography and maybe not much more) into "Jews" (a people affirming common history and bond, shaping their destiny according to the book of the *torah,* Neh 8–10). What S. J. D. Cohen (1999, 104–5) defines as "Jews" corresponds to what EN defines as Israel: a people who "venerate the God of the Judeans, the God whose temple is in Jerusalem . . . , denoting culture, a way of life, or 'religion,' not ethnic or geographic origin." EN portrays the formation of such a people in Ezra 1–Nehemiah 7 and depicts their consolidation in Nehemiah 8–10, concluding with a celebration of success (Neh 11–13).

Judah and Benjamin

The territory of Judah suffered greatly from the Babylonian destruction, but most scholars agree that the region of Benjamin was largely spared. Biblical texts and archaeology indicate that Mizpah in Benjamin, presumably unharmed, became the gubernatorial seat after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 40:5–12 and 2 Kgs 25:22–24). Building remains and seals or seal impressions confirm that Mizpah continued as an important center (Lipschits 1999, 2003; Zorn 1997; Faust 2007, 2012), to which Neh 3:7, 15, 19 testify. Mizpah gradually declined during the Persian period as Jerusalem regained its earlier prominence. A similar archaeological picture applies to other sites in Benjamin: most show continuity from the Babylonian period to the Persian with little sign of destruction (Lipschits 2005, 2011a; Gadot 2015; but see Fried 2015a, 35–44, for a different assessment).

Biblical evidence suggests that Benjamin was a haven for Judeans during the Babylonian siege. Benjamin possibly grew, thanks to such influx of refugees and the demise of Judah. The reconstruction of Judah and Jerusalem, however, gradually reversed the trend. As territory, Benjamin was absorbed into the province of Judah. Its population declined when the center of gravity shifted to Jerusalem (Lipschits 1999) and when the coastal areas became more successful. Read closely, EN may be responding to this shift by highlighting the unity of Judah and Benjamin, especially in the early stages (Ezra 1–6). Importantly, this emphasis may seek to ensure that Benjamin remained part of Judah when boundaries were in flux.

Judah and Its Neighbors

Persia's wars with Greece (500–450 BCE) reoriented imperial attention toward the Mediterranean. Egypt's revolts in 460 BCE and ca. 405 BCE, followed by its independence and incursions into the coastal region, affected military and economic conditions in the Levant (see Lehmann 2014 and Elayi 1992a). EN does not mention any of these important events, and none of the extrabiblical sources mentions Judah's involvement (or lack thereof). Nevertheless, an impact on Judah can be supposed.

Unlike Judah, the coastal plains to the west boasted a dense, multiethnic population during the Persian period. Cities like Jaffa, Ashkelon, Tyre, Sidon, Gaza, and Ashdod were deeply enmeshed in political, military, and economic interactions in the region. Hinterland Judah was somewhat shielded from direct involvement; however, it

would have been expected to provide provisions (e.g., oil and wine) and possibly manpower (see Hoglund 1992 and Faust 2012).

Judah's southern portion was gradually annexed by Idumeans and Arabs who took the area, including Hebron, and controlled the southern lines of commercial and military transportation. The more prosperous Samaria lay to the north of Judah, with Ammon and Moab to the east in the Transjordan. The boundaries between these provinces were politically, culturally, and demographically porous. Persian rule enhanced mobility, as did the unified administrative system that stretched from Egypt to modern-day Afghanistan (Henkelman 2017, 45–256).

Judah's relation with Samaria was distinct and of special significance for EN. As the remnant of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (defeated by the Assyrians in 722 BCE), Samaria shared with Judah a history, language, worship of YHWH, and material and literary culture. Second Kings 17 reports that Assyria replaced the Israelites of Samaria with foreigners. The annals of the Assyrian king Sargon claim that he deported more than twenty-seven thousand from Samaria (*ANET* 284–87). Samaria recovered quickly, however, and some regions were unaffected by the Assyrian onslaught (Zertal 1990; Knoppers 2006, 269; Faust 2003). There is no way to determine the ethnic or demographic composition of the inhabitants of Persian-period Samaria. Pummer (2007, 15) reasonably concludes that Samarians were "the descendants of the (Northern) Israelite tribes, who remained in the land following the Assyrian conquests." But Jews and Samaritans in later sources dispute each other's authenticity, each claiming to be the genealogical and religious heir of preexilic Israel. The precise history leading to the definite split between the two groups remains uncertain.

EN, especially Ezra 4 and Nehemiah's conflict with Sanballat (Neh 2–6), had persuaded readers for centuries of a so-called Samaritan schism during the Persian period. This view dominated until the mid-twentieth century when Coggins (1975), Knoppers (2006 and 2013), and Kartveit (2009) demonstrated that a decisive breach between Judah and Samaria did not occur during the Persian period (Knoppers 2013, 168) and that it took centuries for these communities to "part ways" politically, culturally, and religiously. Literary and inscriptional evidence shows that the worship of YHWH continued in Samaria much as it did in Judah. The prominence of Yahwistic names in Samaria is one of many examples (note Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, Samaria's governor). The Samaritan Pentateuch further illustrates ongoing contacts between the two groups. As Knoppers (2011a, 24) says, "Material and epigraphic evidence from the Persian and Hellenistic eras points to a tremendous cultural overlap between the areas of Samaria and Yehud" (see also Kartveit 2009; Kartveit and Knoppers 2018; Hensel 2016, 2020). The evidence also indicates that Samaria was the more prosperous of the two during the Persian period (Zertal 1990; Knoppers 2013, 104), the city being the most important in the region (Zertal 1990).

EN represents a Judean faction aiming to harden the boundaries between the two groups, and it does not acknowledge the presence of genuine Israelites in the region. The book's treatment of Samaria, a province that held a more direct claim to the name "Israel," is odd: EN never mentions that Sanballat was the governor of Samaria (now known thanks to the Elephantine papyri, e.g., *TAD* A 4.7, and the Samarian papyri, e.g., Gropp et al. 2001). Yet the grandson of Jerusalem's high priest marries Sanballat's daughter (Neh 13:29–30), suggesting amicable relations between the groups in Nehemiah's

time. Chronicles, on the other hand, does recognize genuine, religiously loyal Israelites in Samaria even a century after the Assyrian conquest (2 Chr 36:9, 21). It may reflect a perspective competing with EN or a later stage, when certain divisions have been overcome (on Samaria, see further the Comments at Ezra 9:1–15). EN, however, appears to be specifically focused on competition with Samaria; Heckl (2018, 128) describes the book as "a programmatic text in the conflict between Jerusalem and Samaria."

The Judean Diaspora

As the Bible and archaeology indicate, a significant number of Judeans settled in Babylonia and Egypt, at least since 597 BCE, when the first deportation from Judah took place. While forced migration accounts for Judean settlements in Babylonia, settlements in Egypt were initially places of refuge (see, e.g., Jer 26:20–21, Jer 43).

JUDEANS IN ELEPHANTINE, EGYPT

The most illuminating extrabiblical information about Judeans in the Persian period comes from Elephantine—an island and Persian-period military post in Egypt (near the modern-day Aswan Dam). Hundreds of papyri and ostraca (inscriptions on clay) have been unearthed there. They include some one hundred documents from the fifth century BCE, from or about Judeans in Elephantine. The Elephantine documents bring to life the world of a small diaspora community under Persian rule. The letters, marriage contracts, sales contracts, loans, house conveyances, and the like reflect with precision the community's concerns and interactions. These Elephantine documents disclose information about daily life, economic realities, and religious practices in a Judean diaspora, including domestic arrangements and business practices. For the entire Persian period, even among the vast Babylonian records, there is no equivalent body of multifaceted, datable information from, or for, any other community, Judean or otherwise.

The papyri claim that Judeans settled in Elephantine and built there a temple to YHW (a form of the Hebrew YHWH) before 525 BCE (*TAD* A 4.7.13–14 // Cowley 30). Two specific contributions regarding Judah and EN stand out. First, the Elephantine papyri preserve the only reference to Jerusalem and its priests in an actual, physical document with a date from the Persian period. Judeans from Elephantine, in their letter to Judah's governor, Bagohi, mention an earlier letter to "Jehohanan the high priest and his colleagues the priests who are in Jerusalem, and to Ostanes the brother of Anani and the nobles of the Jews" (*TAD* A 4.7.18–19 // Cowley 30, dated 407 BCE; see also *TAD* A 4.8 // Cowley 31). They also refer to a letter sent to "Delaiah and Shelemiah sons of Sanballat governor of Samaria" (*TAD* A 4.7.29). A subsequent letter records Bagohi's and Delaiah's favorable responses (*TAD* A 4.9, undated).

The importance of this information cannot be overstated. The letters provide a date (407 BCE) for Bagohi as governor of Judah (see "Bigvai" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a). They also document the existence of Jerusalem's temple, overseen by professional personnel and a high priest. Moreover, by turning to Judah's governor and priests for help, Judeans in a remote diaspora location appear to have assumed that Judah's leaders possessed power to affect the Persian administration in Egypt. The reference to Sanballat, governor of Samaria, and his sons establishes dates for important figures, since

Sanballat, Nehemiah's chief adversary (see, e.g., Neh 2:10), appears in EN without a decipherable title.

The second significant contribution of the papyri is their report about YHW's temple in Elephantine (e.g., *TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30) and their references to other deities (*TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22). Kratz (2006) reasonably suggests that Judean religious practices in Elephantine may not have differed greatly from those in Judah in the fifth century BCE. Elephantine thereby can shed light on EN's cultural and religious environment. Additionally, certain features of the destroyed temple in Elephantine likely reflect common traditions in temple furnishings. If so, Elephantine indirectly provides information about Jerusalem's temple (the Notes incorporate such information when relevant).

JUDEANS IN BABYLONIA

Detailed information about Judeans in Babylonia during the Persian period is still limited, but more is expected to emerge as Babylonian tablets are studied further. Some of this new information resembles that from Elephantine, but the Babylonian archives lack Elephantine's specific geographical and communal contexts. Judean names appear in financial tablets such as the Murashu tablets (454–414 BCE), usually referring to debtors, thus implying low status. Some two hundred tablets, many with Judean names (dated 572–477 BCE), offer additional information. A number of these mention the town of Al Yahudu in Babylonia, indicating a settlement of exiled Judeans. The tablets therefore confirm the basic historicity of the Babylonian exile, which some scholars in the late twentieth century questioned (see titles such as "Exile? What Exile?" [Carroll 1998] and "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?" [P. R. Davies 1998]).

Names on the tablets illustrate patterns of Judean identity. The reemergence of Judean names in the third generation, often after Babylonian names in the second generation, is particularly revealing (see Pearce and Wunsch 2014; Waerzeggers 2014; Alstola 2018, 2020). The tablets show that Judeans were integrated in their Babylonian rural environment but not entirely assimilated. Some upward economic and social mobility appears, but not to high positions of leaders such as Sheshbazzar or Ezra in EN. We learn mostly about loans of grain to farmers, mortgages, land leases, and corvée labor (see, e.g., #41 in Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 164, dated 517 BCE).

Waerzeggers (2014, 135; see esp. n. 27) concludes from documented encounters between Babylonians and Judeans that there was a strong communal cohesion among the Judeans but that the communities were not closed off. The presence of Judean witnesses in marriage contracts between Judeans and Babylonians provides evidence for such contact. Alstola (2018, 25) shows that Judean merchants in Babylonia in the sixth century BCE were also integrated into the commercial sphere and participated in long-distance trade: "Because traveling and the transportation of goods are an integral part of commercial activity, merchants provide an example of people who could have maintained connections between Judeans living in Judah and Babylonia" (for a full review, see Alstola 2020).

Thousands of Babylonian palace archives still wait to be studied and published. It is nevertheless evident that the reconstruction that EN envisions was initiated in Babylonia and led by Judeans from Babylonia who chose to return to Judah (see Knoppers

2011a on Babylonia as a center of the reconstituted Judean communities). There can be little doubt that Judeans in and from Babylonia continued to exert a strong influence on events in Judah. Their greater proximity to the ruling power may have played a role.

IV.
Sources and Composition

EN displays its nature as a composite work more overtly than any other biblical book. It is glaringly a collage of material from different sources, periods, languages, and genres, spliced together with added narrative tissue. The basic sources or units are hard to miss. Most scholars agree on the following as the obvious building blocks of the book (while acknowledging that the units themselves may have had a complex redactional history):

1. An Ezra source that includes the Ezra Memoir (Ezra 7:27–9:15), a third-person narrative (Ezra 7:1–11, Ezra 10, and Neh 8, which originally belonged with Ezra 7–10), and an ostensible Aramaic letter from Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12–26)
2. A Nehemiah source (Neh 1:1–7:5 and 13:4–31), most of it consisting of a Nehemiah Memoir (but see Wright 2005, who argues for an extensive development overshadowing a small original core)
3. Aramaic correspondence (Ezra 4:8–6:18), itself divided into independent units (Ezra 4:8–23, 5:1–6:18), including ostensible royal correspondence
4. A communal prayer (Neh 9)
5. A pledge (Neh 10)
6. Numerous lists, including lists of vessels (Ezra 1:7–11), returned exiles (Ezra 2, Neh 7), Ezra's companions (Ezra 8:1–14), intermarried men (Ezra 10:18–44), wall builders (Neh 3), signatories of the pledge (Neh 10:1–30), settlers in Jerusalem (Neh 11), and genealogies (mostly of priests) (Ezra 7:1–5, Neh 12). (For detailed exposition of the layers within some of these sources, see Kratz 2000, Pakkala 2004, and Wright 2005.)

Van Hoonacker (1890, 1923) challenged EN's arrangement, claiming that Nehemiah preceded Ezra (see "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?" below). Batten (1913), for example, rearranged the book in his commentary to follow such a sequence. Many important scholars concur with Torrey (1896, 1910) that Nehemiah 8 was originally situated between Ezra 8 and Ezra 9 (e.g., Myers 1965a; Williamson 1985; Japhet 2019; see also "The Composition of Ezra 9–10" in the Comments at Ezra 9:1–15 below).

The date, origin, and authenticity of EN's sources continue to be contested and are addressed in the Notes and Comments at each of these units. But a review of some overall tendencies can help frame the larger discussions.

Janzen (2000, 623) contributes to such discussions with a helpful distinction between "authentic" and "reliable." Analyzing Ezra 7:12–26, he introduces the following

definitions: "authentic" would mean that the letter "is the same document, or virtually so, as the one that Ezra received"; "reliable" would mean that the text "has been edited or perhaps been composed whole cloth by a later editor, but reflects the actual commands and disposition of the Persian monarch" (ibid.). Hardly anyone claims that the documents in EN are "authentic" as Janzen defines the term, yet debates revolve around a given unit's degree of reliability.

Scholars used to identify editorial activities or demarcate layers of compositions by features such as shifts between first- and third-person accounts, changes in spelling, or abrupt conclusions. However, Polybius (second century BCE) not only switches between first- and third-person points of view within a single book but also explains why (namely, to break monotony) (*Hist.* 36.12). Persian-period documents from Bactria, for example, use different spellings for the same word in a single document (A6.1 // Khalili IA.5, in Naveh and Shaked 2012, 112; see Eskenazi 2010, 215–34, for a review of such practices). Such features, then, need not indicate different compositional periods or hands. Some insights into ancient compositional principles come from the most distinguished ancient historian, Thucydides (fifth century BCE; contemporaneous with the narratives in EN). He writes:

> With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. (*Pelop.* I.22)

Additional insight comes from Cicero in 44 BCE. Wanting to revise what he had already written, Cicero instructs the friend responsible for publishing his work: "I scribbled out a new preface straight away and send it herewith. Please cut the other off and glue this one on" (*Atticus* 414.4 [16.6.4]; for details, see Sievers 2001, esp. 242–43). Cicero also explains elsewhere (*Sen.* 3) that he placed words in the mouth of a venerable historical figure so that they might be taken more seriously.

Countless cogent hypotheses attempt to account for the reliability of discrete sections and the book's overall composition. Torrey (1896, 1910) established lines of argumentation that continue to influence scholarship today. According to him, EN is a unified work authored by the Chronicler, who composed all the Ezra material, including Nehemiah 8–10. There was no other Ezra source. Except for Nehemiah 1–6, the material in EN "has no value whatever as history" (Torrey 1896, 65). Torrey insisted that Nehemiah 8 "cannot be the sequel to Ezra 10" (ibid., 29) and must have followed Ezra 8. The section in Nehemiah 9–10, in his view, originally formed the conclusion to Ezra 9–10 (ibid., 32).

Torrey's rearrangement of the canonical sequence was based primarily on what he considered the "most natural way" for the story to unfold (see, e.g., 1896, 31–32). While exuding confidence about the original order of EN, he was tentative when attempting to explain the rearrangement, blaming it on a confusion due to the similarities between Neh 7:70–8:1 and Ezra 2:68–3:1ff. (ibid., 34).

Although most scholars today grant a measure of reliability to portions of EN when critically assessed, skepticism dominates many recent works. Grabbe represents

a widespread current perspective. According to Grabbe (1998, 130–32), regarding the Aramaic section in Ezra 4–6, the Tattenai letter (Ezra 5:7–17) may possess an authentic core, but the rest is either "Jewish invention" or heavily edited "by a Jewish scribe" (see also Grabbe 2006). The author of the narrative in Ezra 1–6 "has not the faintest idea about the relationship of the Persian kings to one another" (Grabbe 1998, 134). Grabbe reaches the following conclusions: possibly there was a historical Ezra (ibid., 153), but not likely a genuine Ezra Memoir; Ezra 7–9 is "mainly an invention, or Ezra wrote it but deceived us, or it has been heavily worked over by a later editor" (ibid., 152–53); most lists come from other settings, and their authenticity or relevance as historical sources for the present setting is too difficult to assess; and Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 may refer to settlers of Judah in the late fifth century BCE, but not much can be extracted from the text (ibid., 157). For Grabbe, the only potentially authentic list is that of builders in Nehemiah 3. Williamson (1983, 1985), Yoo (2017), and Japhet (2019) reject such skeptical conclusions, granting a measure of reliability to many of EN's sources while also acknowledging embellishment (as the Notes below indicate).

Although the reliability of the Ezra Memoir (most of Ezra 7–9) is widely questioned, scholars generally suppose that the Nehemiah Memoir (most of Neh 1:1–7:5 and 13:4–31) in principle goes back to Nehemiah. Even skeptical scholars such as Gunneweg (1987, 176–80) accept this view. But as Grabbe (1998, 155) (who considers the Nehemiah Memoir reliable) rightly notes, the main argument for such acceptance "is the very subjective and personal one that the NM [Nehemiah Memoir] strikes the reader as a real outpouring."

Such trust in the Nehemiah Memoir is striking, given that not a shred of evidence confirms Nehemiah's historicity. This trust is even more surprising when archaeologists cannot find Nehemiah's wall, his most concrete achievement. References in Ben Sira (49:13) and 2 Macc (1:18–36, 2:13) used to support Nehemiah's historicity can no more confirm it than they can confirm the historicity of Moses and Abraham, who also appear in these texts. The confidence in the reliability of the Nehemiah Memoir, then, may testify more to the ideologies of scholars than to available evidence.

As for the Ezra Memoir, many scholars today consider it inauthentic and unreliable as history, a deliberate composition, possibly in response to the more authentic Nehemiah Memoir. Torrey (1910, ix), who considered Ezra a figment of the Chronicler's imagination, regarded the memoir as a literary device. Kapelrud (1944, 95) concluded that both first- and third-person accounts come from the same hand. Mowinckel (1961, esp. 213–16) concluded that the shifting between the "I" and the "he" narratives aims to dramatize and edify the material. He noted, rightly, that such shifts are not unique to EN in the ancient world; Ahikar and Daniel exemplify similar features. One can add Polybius (second century BCE) as an example (see *Hist.* 36.12; for a fuller discussion, see Eskenazi 2010).

Literary critics can help biblical interpreters regarding "points of view." Rimmon-Kenan (1983, 60) identifies three basic forms of characterization: (1) direct definition, (2) indirect presentation, and (3) reinforcement by analogy. EN employs all three of these modes (for details, see Eskenazi 1988a, 128–29). "Analogy" refers to instances where two characters are presented in a similar situation; a comparison of them throws each into sharper relief. In EN, Ezra's public action after three days in Jerusalem (Ezra

8:32–34), for example, contrasts with Nehemiah's secretive journey after three days in Jerusalem (Neh 2:11–12).

Whereas many scholars tend to view first-person accounts as more trustworthy (an effect that biblical authors probably intended), critics such as Sternberg (1985, 46–57) argue that readers should consider third-person accounts in the Bible as more reliable (for a summary and application to EN, see Eskenazi 1988a, 127–35). According to Sternberg, biblical writers credit the third-person, omniscient narrator with the more objective, reliable perspective. First-person accounts need to be assessed in relation to third-person accounts. Sternberg's approach suggests that EN's narrator uses third-person accounts to verify claims in the Ezra Memoir. In Ezra 8:31, for example, Ezra perceives God's beneficent hand upon him; in Ezra 7:6, the narrator confirms that this is the case. Notably, some of Nehemiah's claims are not confirmed (see Eskenazi 1988a, 127–54).

Discussions about individual sources and units appear in the Notes and Comments. It should be noted here, however, that the widespread reluctance to trust the reliability of the various sources is accompanied by a widespread agreement concerning the scope and extent of the book's basic components. The combining of these components is understood in various ways. The approaches of Williamson, Wright, and Japhet illustrate some major interpretations of the compositional history.

Major Approaches

HUGH G. M. WILLIAMSON

According to Williamson's influential hypothesis, most of EN is a fourth-century BCE work composed in three basic stages:

1. The writing of sources, namely the so-called Ezra Memoir and Nehemiah Memoir, more or less contemporary with the events they describe, with the Nehemiah Memoir going back to Nehemiah (Williamson 1985, xxiv) and the Ezra material (Ezra 7–8, Neh 8, and Ezra 9–10, the likely original sequence) going back to Ezra (ibid., xxxi).
2. The combining of the Ezra Memoir and Nehemiah Memoir with other sections to form Ezra 7:1–Neh 11:2 (ca. 400 BCE), aiming to show unity in the work of the two reformers.
3. The adding of Ezra 1–6 to Ezra 7–Nehemiah 13, with material in Ezra 1–6 derived largely from the Aramaic sources, the earlier memoirs (Ezra 7–Neh 13), and Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 (Williamson 1985, xxxiii–xxxv). Williamson dates the final form of EN to the early Hellenistic period, ca. 300 BCE.

In Williamson's view, the final, pro-priestly editor or author left the sources largely unchanged (see esp. Williamson 1983, 28–30). An organizing principle for the work was the exodus and First Temple typology, with the final section relating to the emergence of the Samaritan temple. Williamson (ibid., 28) considers most of the sources historically reliable, stating that the authors "stood in particular amongst the successors of Ezra and Nehemiah themselves and thus have had an interest in providing an introduction to the account of their work." A guiding motivation was the ongoing conflict

with neighbors and the wish to present the reform as a product of unity (even though Ezra and Nehemiah worked separately).

Blenkinsopp's approach resembles Williamson's but with some differences. Like Williamson, Blenkinsopp supposes that the writers/authors had actual documents, some of them authentic, from which he or they excerpted relevant material. But whereas Williamson sees a dependency of Ezra 1–6 on subsequent chapters, Blenkinsopp (1988, 44) links these chapters with the author of Chronicles and considers them earlier than the rest of the book. He emphasizes parallels with "late Egyptian autobiographical votive texts addressed to God and deposited in a temple" (ibid., 46). Blenkinsopp also regards the Nehemiah Memoir as an excerpt from a larger work (ibid., 47).

JACOB L. WRIGHT

Wright represents what is best termed a "supplementary approach." He claims that a very short Nehemiah Memoir came first; it "gradually developed from a short building report into an account of Judah's restoration, which in turn provided the theological impulses for the literary maturation of Ezra-Neh" (Wright 2005, vii). The memoir prompted the composition of Ezra 1–6 as an attempt to broaden the interpretation of the reconstruction and downplay Nehemiah's critique of the priesthood (ibid., 5–6). Ezra 7–8, as a middle position, was inserted to nuance these messages by bridging the content of Ezra 1–6 and the form of the Nehemiah Memoir. The final major editorial stage included Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 8–10. These chapters view Nehemiah's work more positively and limit the role of priests.

Wright identifies many more underlying layers in terms of compositional history, along with three main stages of additions to Nehemiah's building report. He maintains that tension regarding the priesthood and the temple drove the interpretive choices taken by a coterie of writers/editors who sought to retain earlier voices while also reshaping the story of Israel gradually to express different ideologies. EN in its final form is Hellenistic, reflecting on the Persian period as a model for how the community can live within an empire. More of its features belong to this Hellenistic era than to the Persian period (for other forms of redactional analysis, focusing on the Ezra material, see Pakkala 2004 and a summary in "The Composition of Ezra 9–10" in the Comments on Ezra 9 below; Pakkala highlights tensions between priests and Levites in the composition of EN).

Wright's approach invests the compositional process itself with historical value that is often lacking in other compositional theories. His view differs from that of Williamson, Blenkinsopp, and others who adopt a more "documentary" model, with older sources being edited by a "compiler." Wright (2005, 3), in contrast, considers EN to be "a creatio continua," with the text undergoing a kind of "maturation process." Earlier voices are preserved, as later generations contribute gradually to add new insights to the text (ibid.).

SARA JAPHET

Japhet's approach differs from the other two models. As Japhet (2016) observes, EN's literary sources reflect different genres, dates, compositional histories, and authors. The

book, she maintains, was essentially composed by a single author who combined these sources in the fourth century BCE, perhaps toward 350. It did not have the long redactional history that Williamson and Wright envision. The author, however, used existing sources without including much of his own writing. Instead, he chose to express his historiography by combining preexisting sources into a chronological and historical framework (Japhet 1994, 215).

While not discounting a priori subsequent redactional additions, Japhet considers those to be limited. She holds that EN's author combined material into a two-stage historical sequence (Ezra 1–6 and Ezra 7–Neh 13), each spanning about twenty-two years, that is, a generation. For Ezra 1–6, for which the author did not have an existing narrative, the author combined its many sources to construct one period (Japhet 1994, 212–13). For the second period, the author had "the words of Nehemiah" and "the story of Ezra" as sources. To expresses synchronicity between Ezra and Nehemiah, he broke up the two sources about them into smaller sections and interspersed them with each other to produce the present story (ibid., 213).

Japhet dates the material to the Persian period (ca. 370–360 BCE; see Japhet 2019, 8), with some Hellenistic additions. She emphasizes that EN preserves several genuine voices: those of the sources and those of the final editor (Japhet 2016; see also Japhet 2019, 6–13).

CONCLUSIONS

Williamson, Wright, and Japhet offer three plausible explanations for the formation of EN; others have been proposed. It is not possible to determine with any measure of confidence which one might reflect most accurately the history of EN's formation.

Fortunately, a great deal can be learned from the final form of the book. Pakkala (2004, 11–12) underestimates the historical value of the work when he categorizes the final form as mainly suited for "theological purposes in the synagogue or the church." Instead, EN's final form as "social memory" (Ben Zvi and Levin, 2012) preserves a community's perspectives on a crucial period. As such, it constitutes a historical datum. Furthermore, as scripture, it has been more influential historically than the history that lies behind it, which makes understanding its messages important.

I date EN's final form to the late Persian period (ca. 370–350 BCE), with some small Hellenistic additions, especially in updated lists (a common ANE practice). I find the language and ideology of EN best suited to a Persian-period setting. Linguistic arguments about EN are inconclusive and can be marshaled by both sides without definitively settling the question.

The book's content and form, on the other hand, point to a Persian-period context. For example, EN's respectful treatment of the Persian kings would have little value in a Hellenistic world. EN's pervasive reliance on documents as a persuasive medium for narration and authentication makes sense in the bureaucratic culture of the Persian Empire; it would serve no purpose in a Hellenistic context.

I consider Ezra and Nehemiah, along with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, to have existed, even though reliable information about them is unavailable. I agree that the Ezra material was shaped in relation to the Nehemiah Memoir and that Ezra 1–6 is a distinct composition. I am also persuaded by the view that EN reflects a "maturation process"

(Wright 2005, 3), emerging gradually as voices are added. But I do not see a way to determine the time frame(s) within which the specific units and their sources were combined.

If Ezra was a historical figure and if his mission was in 398 BCE, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that he or his circle composed or edited EN. But given the presently insurmountable difficulties in ascertaining how this book and other biblical books were composed, such a possibility remains highly conjectural.

It is better, therefore, to conclude that anonymous scribes, priests and Levites among them, compiled this work. Perhaps like Thucydides (*Pelop.* 1.22) they included what in their view should have been done and said. Importantly, the authors left many "seams" exposed (more than in any other biblical book), letting future generations know that multiple voices and hands shaped the record of the community's formation. EN's unusual compositional profile, with seams so fully exposed, speaks to the book's ideology of combining diverse strands of history into an integrated whole in which unity does not preclude or erase such diversity.

Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?

Van Hoonacker (1890, 1923) had proposed (the canonical sequence notwithstanding) that the historical Nehemiah preceded Ezra: Ezra arrived during the reign of Artaxerxes II in 398 BCE, not that of Artaxerxes I in 458 BCE. This position quickly won the day (for a review of the issues, see Rowley 1965). To Batten (1913, 28), this conclusion "seems to be inevitable." According to Batten, the texts that combine the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g., Neh 8:9 and 12:36) are but glosses. Ezra must have come in 398 BCE: "these two leaders could not be contemporaries" (Batten, ibid.; see also Myers 1965a).

By the 1980s, however, the major EN commentaries (Clines 1984; Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988) reclaimed the canonical sequence as the likely order. More recently the pendulum has swung back again in favor of the later dating of Ezra's mission (see Fried 2015a; Becking 2018, 98). Japhet (2019, 183) leans in this direction but notes that a conclusion is uncertain. Yoo (2017), however, retains the canonical sequence.

Arguments for placing the historical Ezra after Nehemiah typically rely on the following: (1) The reference to the wall in Ezra 9:9 suggests to some that Nehemiah had already restored Jerusalem's wall. Against this view is the fact that Ezra 9:9 mentions a "fence," not a wall (see Notes at Ezra 9:9). (2) Meremoth, son of Uriah, a supposedly mature man in Ezra 8:33–34, is also viewed as the builder in Neh 3:4, 21. If the year in Ezra 8 is 458 BCE, Meremoth was not likely to be an energetic builder fourteen years later. This popular argument, however, overlooks the fact that "support" in Nehemiah 3 does not necessarily indicate manual labor but can refer to funding or subsidizing workers.

The strongest case for a late date for Ezra is built on the reference to Jehohanan son of Eliashib in Ezra 10:6. The fact that Jehohanan has a chamber at the temple implies that he was a priest. His father's name is that of the high priest Eliashib in Neh 3:1. The Elephantine papyrus *TAD* 4.7.18 // Cowley 30, dated 407 BCE, mentions "Jehohanan the high priest." If the papyrus is referring to the same man, then a late date for Ezra would be the more likely. Yet even here, uncertainty remains. Both names are common

in Persian-period sources. Moreover, if priests in Judah practiced papponomy, as Cross (1975, esp. 6–7) suggests, then the argument for Nehemiah's priority loses its force. Clines (1984, 16–24) and Williamson (1985, xlii–xliv), upon reviewing these and other arguments, conclude in favor of Ezra's historical priority (see Fried 2015a, 303–5, for other reasons).

The issue, however, cannot be decisively resolved (see Suiter 1992 and Brown 2005 for thorough reviews of the arguments). Events in the Levant, especially Egypt's revolts, provide a compelling backdrop for either date for Ezra. Inaros's revolt ca. 460 BCE (which took several years to quell) can plausibly account for Artaxerxes I's support of a mission to Judah in 458 BCE. However, Egypt's successful revolt ca. 401 BCE can just as easily explain why Artaxerxes II would support such a mission in 398 BCE.

There is, however, a widespread agreement that EN's portraits of Ezra and Nehemiah are crafted in relation to each other. Most scholars who concentrate on the redaction of EN consider the Nehemiah Memoir the earlier, possibly as the kernel around which the book as a whole evolved (see Wright 2005 and a review in Eskenazi 2010; see also Pakkala 2004). Ben Zvi and Honigman (2018, 33–34) conclude that 1 Esdras may accurately represent a memory, or even the fact, of the two figures working separately. Importantly, however, EN entwines their missions in keeping with a pattern (Zerubbabel and Jeshua; Haggai and Zechariah) that presents cooperation by leaders as a model for community. The present commentary follows the canonical sequence and the messages it conveys, while addressing at relevant junctures historical issues related to the two sequences.

Which Came First? Ezra-Nehemiah or 1 Esdras?

Obvious parallels between EN and 1 Esdras prompt the question: Which book was first? The titles in the LXX that designate 1 Esdras as *Alpha* and EN as *Beta* reflect the fact that 1 Esdras's narrative begins with Josiah, an earlier period than that of EN. It does not imply the historical priority of 1 Esdras. Indications that LXX 1 Esdras is earlier than LXX EN (so Fulton and Knoppers 2011) likewise do not resolve the matter of the relationship of 1 Esdras to MT EN.

K.-F. Pohlmann (1970) has offered one of the most detailed arguments for the priority of 1 Esdras over MT EN, as well as its independence (see also Böhler 1997). Zipora Talshir's meticulous study of 1 Esdras, however, has been particularly decisive in contesting these conclusions. Having examined the various options, Talshir (1999, 3–16, 21) concludes that 1 Esdras is deliberately derived from Chronicles and EN. Its deletion of Nehemiah served to highlight the Davidic Zerubbabel.

The majority of scholars in Fried's edited volume *Was 1 Esdras First?* (2011) consider EN to be first (including Becking, Fried, Pakkala, Talshir, VanderKam, Wright); they outnumber those who consider 1 Esdras to be earlier (including Fulton and Knoppers and Grabbe). For details, see Fried 2011, 11–166.

The basic principle according to which the more difficult text is likely to be the earlier should have settled the issue: 1 Esdras evidently irons out some unresolvable problems in EN, such as the present location of Ezra 4 (which is blatantly out of chronological order in EN and which 1 Esdras places within a more coherent sequence). But in my view, the priority of EN is significantly attested (yet insufficiently noted in scholarly

discussions) by the Qumran manuscripts. A fragment from 4QEzra reproduces a portion of the problematic Ezra 4:6–7, including the reference to Ahasuerus. Significantly, 1 Esdras omits this passage. As a result, the earliest manuscript in our possession confirms the antiquity of EN's account (for a discussion of 4QEzra, see Ulrich 1992; his essay, however, does not discuss the relation to 1 Esdras).

First Esdras signals knowledge of Nehemiah as an authoritative figure (1 Esd 5:40). But the overall shape of 1 Esdras, which begins with King Josiah, aims to keep the Davidic figures at the center. It celebrates a restoration of what had been lost: the temple and Davidic leadership (see Eskenazi 1988b). Nehemiah's story would only undermine the message (see Wright 2011 for the omission of Nehemiah).

Ben Zvi and Honigman (2018, 33–34), nevertheless, conclude otherwise, claiming that combining the two figures is later than 1 Esdras, Ben Sira, and 2 Maccabees. But if Z. Talshir is right, as she seems to be, and 1 Esdras depends on EN, then the separation of Ezra and Nehemiah traditions is later than EN. Separating the Nehemiah material is consistent with subsequent ancient sources (such as Josephus) that trace different trajectories for the figures of Ezra and of Nehemiah, in line with different, Hellenistic ideologies.

An important contribution to the study of EN is 1 Esdras's placement of Nehemiah 8 after Ezra 10. This sequence conflicts with a scholarly tendency to regard Nehemiah 8 as *necessarily* preceding Ezra 9 (e.g., Torrey 1910; Williamson 1985; Japhet 2019). First Esdras confirms the perception that the logic of the canonical chronology as it stands seemed compelling to an earlier interpreter. While evidently free to make many modifications in the inherited material, the author of 1 Esdras apparently saw no reason to question the logic reflected in the canonical sequence of Ezra 7–10. In my view, there is no compelling reason to deny the priority of the MT arrangement of Ezra 7–10.

V.
The Unity of Ezra-Nehemiah

All ancient sources regard EN as a single book under the name of Ezra. The LXX preserves this unity and titles the work *Esdras Beta.* Jerome, translator of the Bible into Latin, confirms the early unity. Responding reluctantly to an invitation to translate EN, Jerome (ca. 394 CE) writes, "No one ought to be bothered by the fact that my edition consists of only one book. . . . For among the Hebrews the texts of Ezra and Nehemiah comprise a single book, and those texts which are not used by them and are not concerned with the twenty-four elders ought to be rejected outright" (in Weber and Gryson, 1994, 638–39).

The Talmud confirms that EN was regarded as one book ("Ezra"), named after Ezra because Nehemiah was boastful (b. Sanh. 93b). It lists this book after Esther and before Chronicles (b. B. Bat. 14b–15a), thus reflecting the assumption that Chronicles

and EN were not a single work (in which case EN would need to follow Chronicles). The Leningrad Codex (tenth century CE) likewise preserves EN as a single book, placing it as the final book (with Chronicles as the first in the Ketuvim/Writings). Dividing EN into two books began with the Vulgate and is perpetuated in non-Hebrew, non-Jewish versions. But today, some modern Jewish Bibles (such as the NJPS) also treat Ezra and Nehemiah as distinct books (placing them before Chronicles).

Zunz (1832) argued that EN and Chronicles came from the same author(s), namely, the Chronicler (reversing earlier tendencies to consider Ezra as the author of Chronicles). The unity of EN and Chronicles, then, became a standard presupposition that shaped scholars' interpretations of EN. Most commentaries until the 1970s refer to the author or editor of EN as the "Chronicler" and date EN in accordance with Chronicles (e.g., Batten 1913; Myers 1965a).

Japhet's (1968) watershed study successfully contested this presumption and thereby changed the field. She demonstrated with precision that Chronicles and EN differ in decisive ways, including in their language, perspective, ideology, and style. Examples include the attitude toward incorporating foreigners or Israelites from the north, the role of King David, and even the role of the cult (see also Williamson 1977). The separation of the two works paved the way for discerning EN as a distinct and unified work with its own structure (Eskenazi 1988a, 1988b).

Most scholars now separate EN from Chronicles and regard EN as a unified book (but see Blenkinsopp 1988, 47–54, for a different opinion). A minority of scholars read "Ezra" and "Nehemiah" as two books with different agendas (VanderKam 1992b; Kraemer 1993; Jones 2018). An edited volume devoted to the subject of the unity or disunity of EN (Boda and Redditt 2008) reflects wide-ranging agreement that the book is best approached as a unity. As noted, Ben Zvi and Honigman (2018) have argued that the two traditions were originally separate and not combined until the Hasmonean period.

As this commentary illustrates, various "Ezra" and "Nehemiah" sources, together with other traditions, have been carefully stitched together to produce a unified EN. This unity includes reproducing diverse perspectives and voices. Such "stitched" unity is more than a literary device. It goes to the heart of EN's message about the return and reconstruction as a process of unification that also preserves distinctions.

VI.
The Theology of Ezra-Nehemiah

Like other biblical writings, EN interprets history theologically. Persian kings are God's instruments, and God is profusely mentioned in the book: the name YHWH appears 54 times in EN (cf. 277 times in the slightly longer 2 Kings); "God," *ʾĕlōhîm,* is more frequent, appearing 125 times. Like most of the Bible, EN insists on monolatry and Jerusalem as God's unique abode.

EN differs, however, from other biblical historiography (from Joshua to Kings) by focusing on God's indirect intervention. While God-language abounds in EN, the narrator rarely mentions God's actual intervention beyond the opening verses (Ezra 1:1–6). One might compare EN's theology to Deism, in which God sets the clock in motion in Ezra 1 and then works primarily through human agents and documents in the remainder of the narrative. God initiates the return and reconstruction by inspiring Cyrus and the people to build God's house in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–6). In the few other divine actions in the book, vouched for by the narrator, God shows favor toward the Judean elders (Ezra 5:5), brings joy to the celebrating Judeans (Ezra 6:22 and Neh 12:43), bestows favor on Ezra (Ezra 7:6, 9), and gives the *torah* to Israel (Neh 8:1, 14). The narrator confirms that *torah* means God's *torah* (Neh 8:18 and 9:3).

All the other references to God's activities belong to the protagonists, who repeatedly display their trust in God's support, grace, and justice, thus affirming God's persistent engagement with their lives. They pray to God individually (Ezra 9:6–15, Neh 1:5–11) and collectively (e.g., Neh 9), invoking God at all key moments. "Our God" appears in EN more often than in any other biblical book (thirty-six times).

EN's theology also differs from that of other biblical historiographies in how it positions the role of the written *torah.* EN depicts what can be termed "the textualization of the tradition." Heeding God's voice in EN increasingly centers on implementing God's *torah* (Neh 10). Even Nehemiah, who never mentions the *torah* in his memoir, exemplifies such a commitment to *torah* teachings (albeit indirectly): his reforms implement laws that in Nehemiah 10 express commitment to the *torah* (for the correspondence between the pledge in Neh 10 and Nehemiah's reforms, see, e.g., Clines 1981, 111–17; Eskenazi 1988a, 127–54, esp. 144–52; Eskenazi 1989).

EN describes, as no other book in the Bible, concrete and persistent steps taken to implement *torah* teachings as a national policy. The textualization of tradition means regarding a text, rather than human representatives (priests, prophets), as the vehicle for God's messages to Israel. Nehemiah 8 reflects the turning point at which this comes to the fore. The *torah* becomes the Torah. That the people rise up and bow when the book of the Torah is opened (Neh 8:5–6) signals the new veneration accorded to this text, and the recognition of it as the defining source for the people's conduct.

EN presents the reconstituted community in the land as the people of Israel, called to consecrate themselves to God. Like the Israel that had been redeemed from Egypt, the community has been recently redeemed and is again commanded to live according to specific teachings. The repetition of "this day" in Neh 9:10 and 9:32 equates the present situation with the past. As Williamson (1985) notes, the story of postexilic community is cast as a new exodus. Yoo (2017) highlights Ezra's story as a "second Wilderness" account. But the most decisive frame of reference in EN is of the reconstituted Israel as the people who implement the teachings of this *torah,* with Nehemiah 8 depicting a "new Sinai." Ezra 9–10 illustrates an interpretation of what that means for Ezra's generation. The hard-to-miss allusions to Deuteronomy in Ezra 9:1–2 and 9:11–12 both revise and apply the text anew. Ezra 9–10 grants legitimacy only to Judeans who consecrate themselves to God and God's teachings as interpreted by the rigorous standards of the returned exiles.

The language of "the seed of the *qōdeš,*" the consecrated seed (Ezra 9:2), defines the community. It does not claim that Israel is inherently, or at all, holy (*qādôš*), but

only that it has been designated to devote itself to the holy one and therefore must guard against impurities (see the Notes at Ezra 9:1–2 for details). In EN, this destiny requires cultic and social separation from the peoples of the land(s), most likely including Judeans who had not been exiled and Israelites who did not adhere to the standards of EN. Whereas Deut 7:1–6 mandated the destruction of those in the land, Ezra 9–10 instead requires an invisible boundary. To this end, EN excludes foreigners from membership and cultic events. Ezra 9–10 specifically forbids exogamy. Nehemiah 9:2 and 13:1–3 (which practically quotes Deut 23:4–7) exclude foreigners from specific cultic activities. In EN, the dedicated community commits itself to the *torah* and the temple (Neh 10) in response to the history of Israel's (often failed) relationship with God (Neh 9).

EN's position on what God demands of the community contrasts with that of Isa 56:1–7, another postexilic text. Like EN, the prophet in Isaiah 56 highlights commitment to the covenant. But while privileging the covenant and the Sabbath as criteria for membership, the prophet explicitly includes as potential members foreigners and others whom Deuteronomy and EN specifically exclude (e.g., eunuchs; cf. Deut 23:2 and Isa 56:3–5; "foreigners" in Isa 56:6–7 and Neh 13:1–3). Such contrasting theological perspectives on Israel's collective identity reflect a tension present throughout the Bible. The tension is especially pronounced in the postexilic period when dispersion, exile, diaspora, and return dislodged communal identity from relatively stable geographical and ethnic patterns (see, e.g., Southwood 2012; Rom-Shiloni 2013). This tension continues in postbiblical times. EN represents the position that strong boundaries are necessary for those who seek to carry out God's teaching and to survive as a community. For EN, this is the message of the *torah.*

VII.
A History of Interpretation

Ezra-Nehemiah in Early Jewish Sources

1 Esdras (third or second century BCE)

The Hellenistic work 1 Esdras is known by several names (= Esdras A [*Alpha*] in the LXX and 3 Ezra in the Vulgate). It is preserved in Greek and Slavonic Bibles as well as in the Apocrypha in many English translations. First Esdras reproduces in Greek and with some variations what in the MT appears as 2 Chronicles 35–36, Ezra 1–10, and Neh 8:1–13a. It attempts to fix the confusion resulting from Ezra 4:1–24 by changing the chronology. It also adds an extensive story that extols Zerubbabel and his role in the restoration, yet omits Nehemiah's activities.

The narrative arc of 1 Esdras begins Israel's story with a grand celebration followed by destruction (1 Esd 1 = 2 Chr 35–36). It then rapidly moves to detailed restoration and celebration (1 Esd 2 and 5:7–9:55 = Ezra 1–10 and Neh 8:1–13a). The overarching ideology of 1 Esdras largely resembles that of Chronicles, including the emphasis on the house of David, which, in 1 Esdras, continues with Zerubbabel, who is explicitly identified as Davidic (see, e.g., 1 Esd 5:5; see Eskenazi 1988b).

The relationship between 1 Esdras and the canonical EN has been carefully investigated in the modern era, with special attention to determining which work was composed first. Although many scholars consider 1 Esdras earlier than EN, not a revision of it, the majority regard it as the later work (see "Which Came First? Ezra-Nehemiah or 1 Esdras?" above). As such it is the earliest interpretation of EN, adapting EN to serve changed cultural, religious, and political circumstances.

BEN SIRA (EARLY SECOND CENTURY BCE)

Ben Sira (Sirach) praises Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Nehemiah for the same achievements reflected in EN (Sira 49:11–13). Ben Sira praises Nehemiah specifically for building "our fallen walls" and "our ruined houses" (Sira 49:13) but makes no mention of Ezra. This silence with regard to Ezra (like that of 2 Maccabees) has contributed to theories about the late composition of EN and to the view that Ezra was not a historical figure.

2 MACCABEES (LATE SECOND CENTURY BCE)

Second Maccabees ascribes a number of achievements to Nehemiah that do not appear in EN. It casts Nehemiah in both kingly and priestly roles (Ben Zvi and Honigman 2018), presenting Nehemiah as restorer of the temple's sacred fire (2 Macc 1:18–36). Second Maccabees 2:13 also adds that more information about the restoration can be found "in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings." Second Maccabees, however, makes no mention of Nehemiah's wall or Ezra.

JOSEPHUS (LATE FIRST OR EARLY SECOND CENTURY CE)

Only Josephus in the early centuries CE includes both Ezra 1–10 and much of Nehemiah 1–13 in his account, but he completely separates the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah. Josephus's *Antiquities* XI focuses on the return and restoration, embellishing the portrait of Cyrus and his generous support for the temple and claiming that Cyrus directly commissioned Zerubbabel, not only Sheshbazzar (*Ant.* XI.i.1–18 // XI.1–20). Josephus sets the conflict in Ezra 4 in King Cambyses' reign and attributes the oppositions to the Samaritans (XI.ii.1–2 // XI.16–33). He includes next the story of Darius's three guards (as per 1 Esd 3–5). He then describes Zerubbabel leading both the mass Judean return (XI.iii.1–10 // XI.34–69) and the successful rebuilding of the temple despite temporary opposition from Samaria (XI.iv.1–9 // XI.73–123).

Josephus's depiction of Ezra largely follows that of 1 Esdras but places him in the reign of King Xerxes (*Ant.* XI.v.1–5 // XI.120–58). Like 1 Esdras, Josephus places mate-

rial parallel to Nehemiah 8 directly after Ezra 10, but with Ezra alone as leader. Ezra dies an old man and is buried in Jerusalem.

Josephus abbreviates Nehemiah's story (*Ant.* XI.v.6–8 // XI.159–83), placing him also under King Xerxes. Josephus expands the dialogue between the king and Nehemiah and then concentrates on the successful building of the wall. He briefly mentions that Nehemiah arranged for a fuller resettlement of Jerusalem and secured tithing (cf. Neh 11–13) before recording Nehemiah's death in old age. Josephus then moves to the story of Mordecai and Esther. Josephus's account of Nehemiah makes no use of the material about him in 2 Maccabees. He does not mention Nehemiah's chief opponents in EN, Sanballat and Tobiah. Instead, he refers to conflict with a Sanballat long after Nehemiah, at the time of Alexander the Great (XI.viii.3 // XI.315).

2 Esdras (Late First to Third Centuries CE)

Several books are named after Ezra but titled differently in the various versions. The apocalyptic work 2 Esdras is the most widely circulated and influential version of the legacy of Ezra, aside from EN and 1 Esdras. Second Esdras is included in Slavonic Bibles and in many English translations in the Apocrypha, but not in the LXX. Some sections of the book combine Jewish and Christian material.

Second Esdras (= 3 Esdras in the Slavonic Bible and 4 Esdras in the Appendix to the Vulgate) is composed of three distinct units conventionally also designated 4 Ezra (chs. 3–14), 5 Ezra (chs. 1–2), and 6 Ezra (chs. 15–16). Fifth Ezra and 6 Ezra survived in full only in Latin and are distinctly Christian.

Second Esdras 1–2 (= 5 Ezra) is a second- or third-century CE Christian composition, probably written in Greek. It is appended to serve as a prologue to 2 Esdras 3–14 (= 4 Ezra). This work depicts Ezra as a prophet who reviews Israel's history of recalcitrance and proclaims (rather conventional) prophetic messages. It culminates with Ezra witnessing on Mount Zion the adoration of a young man said to be "the Son of God." Ezra is then commissioned to preach this news (2 Esd 2:42–48).

Second Esdras 3–14, also known as 4 Ezra, was most likely written in Hebrew as a response to the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE. It describes, however, Ezra's reaction to the Babylonian destruction of the temple in 587/586 BCE. In a series of seven visions, the book wrestles with the meanings of the destruction, God's justice, and future hope. In the seventh vision Ezra mourns the loss of the sacred scriptures ("for your law has been burned" [2 Esd 14:21]). God then grants Ezra a revelation that enables him and his assistants to reproduce the lost books; twenty-four of them are to be made public, and seventy others, to be given only to the wise (ch. 14). The numbers obviously correspond to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible. The reference to the seventy books bestows authority on pseudepigraphic works. Most early readers interpreted the book as affirming the restoration of the authentic Mosaic tradition, but by the Middle Ages, the relation between Ezra's books and Moses's came to be questioned (see below "Ezra-Nehemiah in Muslim/Islamic Sources").

Second Esdras 15–16 (= 6 Ezra) is also Christian in origin. It includes apocalyptic visions to be proclaimed by the prophet, presumably Ezra. Its messages of doom for the wicked conclude with hope for the elect.

Ezra-Nehemiah in Later Jewish Sources

Rabbinic sources develop elaborate traditions about the restoration era and its leading figures. The period of EN in these texts is held both superior to and inferior to prior eras. According to rabbinic sources, prophetic inspiration ceased after Malachi (b. Sanh. 11a), whom they identified as Ezra (see Targum translation of Mal 1:1). While rabbinic sages claim that divine presence did not rest upon the second temple, some nonetheless credit to this period the unique power of the Torah as a revelatory source (Pirkei Hechalot 27).

Ezra himself is glaringly absent from the chain of tradition in the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1.1 (ca. 200 CE), a text that traces the transmission of *torah* from Moses to the rabbinic sages. Instead, Pirkei Avot links the prophets and the rabbis through "The Men of the Great Assembly," who represent the postexilic period. The Rambam (Introduction to Mishnah Torah) considered the Men of the Great Assembly to be Ezra's court, thus accounting for the silence about Ezra himself in Pirkei Avot.

Post-Mishnah rabbinic sources, however, bestow upon Ezra exceptional praise. Most importantly, they cast him as a second Moses: "Ezra was worthy for the Torah to be given to Israel through him had Moses not preceded him" (b. Sanh. 21b). The rabbis excuse Ezra's late arrival in Judah by explaining that he refused to abandon his aged teacher, Baruch son of Neriah (Jeremiah's scribe; see Jer 36:4), and left Babylonia only upon his teacher's death. The Talmud credits Ezra with ten ordinances. The first two require reading the Torah on Saturday afternoons, Mondays, and Thursdays (presumably in addition to Shabbat morning and holy days) and holding courts on Mondays and Thursdays (presumably because the latter are market days). The other eight ordinances pertain to practical domestic arrangements such as times for baking, immersion, and eating garlic and the importance of ensuring that peddlers travel to small towns (b. B. Qam. 82).

The Talmud, which refers to EN as the book of Ezra, further claims that Ezra wrote the genealogies of Chronicles and his own book, which Nehemiah completed (b. B. Bat. 15a). Another tradition (b. Sanh. 93b) states that Nehemiah wrote the story of Ezra. Why was the book not called by Nehemiah's name? One explanation: because Nehemiah took too much credit for himself (so Rabbi Jeremiah son of Abba). Another explanation: because he disparaged predecessors (so Rabbi Joseph).

A rabbinic source attributes the change of script for the Torah to the time of Ezra. The Torah was initially given to Israel in Hebrew script (presumably paleo-Hebrew) and the sacred tongue. But it was given again at the time of Ezra in the *ashuri* (Assyrian) script (presumably the current script that is originally Aramaic) and the Aramaic tongue. The Jewish people selected the *ashuri* script and the sacred tongue (b. Sanh. 21b).

The major medieval Jewish commentators did not write on EN. What is transmitted as the work of "Rashi" (eleventh century) on EN was actually written two or three generations later, cited now as "Pseudo Rashi." What is transmitted as "Ibn Ezra" (twelfth century) is most likely the work of Moshe Kimḥi (also twelfth century; see Japhet 2019, 28), cited now as "Pseudo Ibn Ezra."

Several copies of a Hebrew commentary on Ezra (i.e., EN) have been attributed to a Rabbi Saadia. While some traditions claim that Saadia Gaon (ninth century) wrote a commentary on EN, Mathews, the editor and transcriber of a complete version of that

commentary (now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), argues against such authorship (see Mathews 1882, i–xxiv). He suspects that it was originally attributed to a twelfth-century Saadia (ibid., xviii–xix). Rabbi David Altschuler, known as Mezudath David (eighteenth century), wrote a concise commentary on EN, as did Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michael Wisser known as Malbim (nineteenth century).

Ezra-Nehemiah in Early Christian Sources

Several works from antiquity bearing Ezra's name have been preserved by Christians in various languages (Greek, Latin, Armenian, Slavonic, Ethiopic, and more). They reflect Christian interests and likely were composed, or heavily edited, by Christians.

In addition to 2 Esdras, most of which is Christian (see above), four short apocalyptic works come under the name of Ezra. They address issues of sin and punishment:

1. Vision of Ezra (fourth to seventh centuries CE; Latin; see Mueller and Robbins 1983)
2. Questions of Ezra (date unknown; Armenian Apocrypha; see Stone in Charlesworth 1983, 591–99)
3. Revelation of Ezra (before the ninth century CE; Latin; see Fiensy in Charlesworth 1983, 601–4)
4. The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra (second to ninth centuries CE; Greek; see Stone in Charlesworth 1983, 561–79)

The extant version of the Vision of Ezra is a Christian composition with affinities to 4 Ezra (2 Esdras 3–14) and the other apocalyptic versions of Ezra. It includes a descent into the underworld and a journey to paradise (see Mueller and Robbins 1983).

Several church fathers mention Ezra, usually in reference to issues of biblical chronology (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.127.2–3, 123–24, 149; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.21.2 [24.1]). The prophetic messages they ascribe to Ezra depend on 4 Ezra, which is evident from their interest in Ezra's restoration of the sacred books, including hidden ones (see Kraft 1979). Kraft (1979, 126) sums up key points about Ezra in early Christian sources:

> He is remembered most widely as the one through whom God restored scriptures (see above, Irenaeus, Clement, Malalas, Suidas), and Tertullian suggests that those "scriptures" even included books like Enoch (*Hab. Mul.* 1.3). Perhaps the reference by Malalas and Suidas to the "books not found" was also meant to refer to the extra-canonical writings. Justin even claims that the Jews had excised from their scriptures a passage in which Ezra, in the priestly cultic context of Passover, uses language congenial to Christian ideas of salvation (*Dial.* 72.1).

Kraft further points to Christian traditions from the fourth and fifth centuries CE that differentiate between two distinct, nearly contemporary Ezra figures, one of them a prophet and the other a priest.

Ezra-Nehemiah in Samaritan Sources

The Samaritans, who consider themselves as the genuine remnant of biblical Israel (thus Israelites of Samaria), do not regard EN as scripture. Their Pentateuch is nearly identical to the Jewish Torah. While the variants between the two are statistically insignificant, they are of momentous religious, theological, and political importance. According to the Samaritan Pentateuch, God specifically names Mount Gerizim and Shechem as the place where YHWH chose to be worshipped (see, e.g., the Samaritan interpretations of Exod 20:17 and Deut 27:4). The Samaritans hold Judeans or Jews responsible for breaking away from the authentic biblical tradition, with the postexilic period as one such time of separation.

Samaritan writings that pertain to EN are preserved only in late medieval manuscripts. The Samaritan Chronicles, also known as *Sepher haYamin* (Hjelm 2000, 98–103), is the main source for information relevant to EN. This work shows awareness of EN's narrative and offers a polemical counternarrative, casting Zerubbabel and Ezra as villains. For example, the Levite Sanballat exposes Zerubbabel's Torah as a forgery. An ordeal by fire proves the case: the Judean Torah burns, but that of the Samaritans repeatedly escapes undamaged. Still, according to the Chronicles, the Samaritans had hoped that the Jews after the exile would return to worship at the original site (i.e., Mount Gerizim), but the Jews refused (ibid., 258–60). Samaritan Sanballat appears again in an account of conflict (resembling Ezra 4). Hjelm (ibid., 260) writes, "Ezra and Zerubbabel are accused of having forged the holy writ, introduced a new alphabet, removed the references to Gerizim and given a new addition to the people, declaring, 'This is the book of God, the authentic truth. Put your faith in it and make copies of this alone.'"

Ezra-Nehemiah in Muslim/Islamic Sources

The Qur'an recognizes the divine origin of the Mosaic *torah* (Sura 5.44). But a tradition that Ezra restored sacred writings developed in some circles into a claim that the Torah in its present form is from Ezra, not Moses. Al Qirqisani (ca. 937 CE), a Karaite (i.e., a nonrabbinic Jew), records such accusations, and a number of medieval Muslim writers repeat these claims (Whittingham 2013, 260). Conceivably, vague language in 2 Esdras 14, which does not specify that Ezra copied the *identical* lost books, encouraged such an interpretation.

The Qur'an (9.30) mentions an 'Uzayr who is widely, though not always, identified as Ezra: "The Jews say: 'Uzayr is the Son of God,' and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of God.' That is their statement, by their mouths; they emulate the statement of the unbelievers of yore. May God damn them; how they are perverted!" Several medieval Muslim writers who accepted Ezra as the figure in this Sura maintained that Moses's Torah perished and that the present version is the work of Ezra. Al-Tabari (d. 923 CE) considered Ezra's version an accurate reproduction of Moses's Torah (as intimated in 2 Esd 14) and appealed to this claim to account for Ezra's veneration in Sura 9.30. In contrast, Al Maqdisi (ca. 966 CE), Al-Juwayni (d. 1085 CE), and Ibn Hazm (994–1064 CE) insisted that the extant Torah is the work of Ezra (i.e., not from Moses); alternatively, if it is an accurate reproduction by him, it was corrupted by his disciple (Whittingham 2013, 256–57, 261–64). Ibn Hazm emphasized the role of "Ezra the scribe" as a corrupter (ibid., 256–57; see also H. Lazarus Yafeh, n.d.).

Ezra-Nehemiah in Modern Interpretations

Like other biblical books, EN was read for millennia as an accurate description of the events it records. It served as the primary source for the history of Judah from 538 BCE (the rise of Cyrus) to a time after 432 BCE (the estimated date for Nehemiah's second mission in Neh 13:6). Even the Jewish Dutch philosopher Spinoza, who radically undermined the historical reliability of the Bible by discrediting Mosaic authorship, did not challenge EN's reliability.

In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1677), Spinoza claimed (as did Hobbes, in *Leviathan* [1651], ch. 33) that the Pentateuch did not come from Moses and that it was compiled from different sources over time. Spinoza credited Ezra as the one who edited or wrote not only the Pentateuch but also Judges, Samuel, and Kings (Spinoza 1677, 120–32, esp. 129–30).

Other founders of modern biblical criticism also did not initially challenge the authenticity of EN. Wellhausen's influential version of the "Documentary Hypothesis," like Spinoza, magnifies the importance of a historical Ezra and the work of Nehemiah. Wellhausen (1883) dates the final compilation of the Pentateuch to the exilic or early postexilic era. He credits Ezra with some editorial work, including some of the Hexateuch (i.e., the Pentateuch with Joshua; see ibid., X.II.2). He writes: "Substantially at least, Ezra's law-book, in the form in which it became the Magna Charta of Judaism in or about the year 444, must be regarded as practically identical with our Pentateuch, although many minor amendments and very considerable additions may have been made at a later date" (ibid., XI.IV.10; ET 2014 edition, 524). For Wellhausen, the Priestly source, along with the final version of the Pentateuch, represents a decline. The former religion of Israel was now "encrusted" and "ossified." This sentiment became widespread in early critical scholarship. Perhaps it accounts for the relative lack of scholarly interest in EN until recent times.

Although negative attitudes toward EN continue to be linked with Wellhausen, it is worth noting that his response was more appreciative than that of many of his followers:

> At the same time it must be remembered that the kernel needed a shell. It was a necessity that Judaism should incrust itself in this manner; without those hard and ossified forms the preservation of its essential elements would have proved impossible. At a time when all nationalities, and at the same time all bonds of religion and national customs, were beginning to be broken up in the seeming cosmos and real chaos of the Graeco-Roman empire, the Jews stood out like a rock in the midst of the ocean. When the natural conditions of independent nationality all failed them, they nevertheless artificially maintained it with an energy truly marvelous, and thereby preserved for themselves, and at the same time for the whole world, an eternal good. (Wellhausen 1883, XI.IV.10; ET 2014 edition, 525)

Both Spinoza and Wellhausen, while denying Mosaic authorship of the Torah, did not deny the historicity of EN's account; on the contrary, they attributed great value to it. Torrey (1896, 1910), however, claimed that Ezra was the fictive product of the Chronicler's imagination. Referring to Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8–10 he writes, "It

is *the Chronicler,* and the Chronicler alone whose work can be discerned here" (1896, 15; emphasis original). As already noted, Torrey maintained that EN contains no facts. It conforms to the Chronicler's method, showing his familiar "unhistorical features" (ibid., 57). Torrey's evidence includes (1) the improbability of the story itself, (2) the method that conforms to the Chronicler's "talent for manufacturing just such stories," and (3) the silence of Ben Sira, which confirms that Ezra did not exist (ibid., 60–61).

Most twentieth-century commentaries (Batten 1913; Rudolph 1949; Myers 1965a; Clines 1984; Williamson 1985; and Blenkinsopp 1988), however, support a consensus, held throughout most of the twentieth century, that "the constituent parts of Ezra-Nehemiah preserved authentic correspondence and memoir that accrued independently of each other and, through some degree of editorial reworking, were fused together into Ezra-Nehemiah" (Yoo 2017, 8).

Trust in Ezra's historicity and EN's reliability as history has dwindled significantly in recent decades (see, e.g., Grabbe 1998; Fried 2014; Becking 2018). Significantly, Nehemiah's historicity is rarely doubted. Nehemiah's account is certainly plausible, but so is Ezra's (except for the inventory of gifts in Ezra 8:25–27). The evidence or lack of it is predominantly the same for both figures. As Yoo (2017, 12) rightly observes, deciding how much of the historical Ezra or Nehemiah can be retrieved, if at all, remains "an ideological debate." But the imprint of Ezra and Nehemiah in EN is clear and as such has been historically influential (for debates about the historicity of accounts in Ezra 1–6, see the Notes and Comments at specific sections).

Interest in EN has dramatically increased since the mid-1980s, resulting in literally hundreds of new publications. The impetus may have been the growing consensus that the Persian period was decisive for the formation of the Pentateuch and for the Hebrew Bible as a whole. Although both Spinoza and Wellhausen suggested as much, it took time for the implications of their theories to be appreciated.

Conclusion

If biblical texts were heavily edited, compiled, or composed during the Persian period, then it follows that what we know about the preexilic periods in the Bible is filtered through the lenses of postexilic communities. One would expect the ideologies of such communities to influence the formation of biblical texts. Since EN is the only detailed and explicit text about such communities, understanding its outlook and interpretations is fundamental to understanding the rest of the Hebrew Bible. This is one of the reasons why the present commentary seeks to identify the perspectives and positions embedded within EN, as well as the manner in which EN constructs the events. Conceivably, the weaving together of events and people in EN, as well as EN's ideologies, represent an editorial agenda that also shapes much else in the Hebrew Bible.

The Notes and Comments explore the book's perspectives, engaging as well various interpretations case by case. These include issues such as the nature of Ezra's *torah,* the influence of the Persian Empire on it, and the crisis resulting from marriages with "the peoples of the land(s)" in Ezra 9–10. One overarching trend, however, requires a general discussion.

P. R. Davies's *In Search of Ancient Israel* (1992) put into question the reliability of all the historical narratives in the Hebrew Bible by asking, Was there ever an Israel before

the Persian period? While Davies's "search" was somewhat restrained, often taking the form of questions, others answered the questions by promulgating what came to be called "the Minimalist School." Whitelam (1996, 23), for example, claimed, "The picture of Israel's past as presented in the Hebrew Bible is a fiction, a fabrication like most pictures of the past constructed by the ancient (and one might add, modern) societies."

The results of these theories affected the interpretation of EN in two divergent ways. One line of argumentation minimized the impact of the Babylonians upon Judah and considered the exile to be an exaggerated construct. Robert Carroll's "Exile? What Exile?" (1998) exemplifies this outlook, as does some of the work of Barstad, especially *The Myth of the Empty Land* (1996).

Another line of argumentation went in a different direction. It claimed that what EN and the Hebrew Bible present as a return actually refers to people with no prior relation to the land, who then invented a past in the land. P. R. Davies's "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?" (1998, 132) makes this argument: "There is also indirect but persuasive evidence of immigration into Judah, both from neighbouring territories and from Babylonia, and, again, as both voluntary and coercive. These movements correspond to what biblical scholars call 'the Return' (or formerly 'the Restoration') and produce the claim on the part of the immigrants to have been exiles." In Davies's reframing of the narrative, those regarded as returnees in EN are in fact immigrants with no claims to historical continuity in the land.

These sweeping claims have been challenged by archaeological studies since the 1990s. An anecdote illustrates these parallel developments. One of the sessions at the 1993 SBL International Meeting in Münster reviewed Davies's *In Search of Ancient Israel.* Most of the presenters defended Davies's skepticism about biblical accounts such as the very existence of a Davidic dynasty. Coincidentally, and literally, at the same time, an Israeli archaeologist announced informally in a session I was chairing that a ninth-century BCE inscription with the words "the house of David" had been excavated a few weeks earlier. This inscription, now known as the Tel Dan Inscription, seemed like a response to Davies's thesis.

As for EN's reliability, although some new discoveries challenge EN's rendition of events, others support it (see "Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period" above). New evidence of demonstrable devastation of Jerusalem and Judah in the sixth century (see, e.g., Lipschits 2005) has since debunked denials of a major crisis in 587/586 BCE. The mention of Al Yahudu in Babylonian tablets, first published in 1996 and 1998 (Lemaire 2015, 37–45) and more fully since (Pearce and Wunsch 2014), confirmed the presence of exiles from Judah in Babylonia. Also, more information on literary techniques (e.g., the genre of lists; see van de Mieroop 1999) enables a reinterpretation of the biblical material in light of ancient scribal practices (see Notes at Ezra 2:2a).

In the long run, Davies's book provoked a more sophisticated and critical appreciation of the Bible as an ideological construct. While some reduced the Bible to mere ideology (Whitelam 1996), others offered more nuanced explorations of the relationship between history and what is now regarded as "social memory" (Ben Zvi 2019). Such approaches include a new appreciation of the historical value of the literary representations themselves: Whitelam (ibid., 23–24) writes, "A primary question which has to be borne in mind is, 'What function does this particular representation of the past fulfill and what other possible representations of the past is it denying?'" Whitelam's

own answers to the questions are too hypothetical to stand as critically tenable, based as they are on what does not exist. His analysis suffers from the shortcomings of other "alternative histories" that were fashionable (as Thonemann [2020] observes) for a time. But without succumbing to Whitelam's extreme skepticism, it is possible to concur that the question about the function of biblical representation is indeed historically and literarily significant. The function is best construed, or accessed, by a close analysis of the representation itself. That is indeed a task and a goal of this commentary.

It remains the case that the actual history of Judah during the Persian period, including the historicity of EN's accounts, continues to be obscure and controversial. Diverse theories about basic historical facts, including the processes of composition, continue to be debated, with little consensus in view. But even though we do not have enough access to the events hidden behind the text, many of the depicted events are possible and even probable. Some established facts, such as the archaeology of the land, directly challenge the biblical claim about the arrival of 42,360 people, for example. Fortunately, however, historical evidence that contradicts the text can assist interpretation by throwing into sharper relief EN's perspective or ideology. The Notes and Comments illustrate such use of the material as it relates to specifics in the text.

Answers to many questions about EN remain hypothetical, but this does not leave readers bereft of access to what EN seeks to communicate. As Childs (1979, 637) points out, "There are times in which historical and literary questions can be left unresolved without jeopardizing the hearing of the biblical message."

VIII.
A Guide to the Commentary

The commentary follows the MT, where Ezra 1–10 is the first part of the unified Ezra-Nehemiah. It focuses on EN's version of the transformative period of return and reconstruction. Starting with the premise that the first duty of a commentator is to enable the reader to understand the inherited texts in their fullness, I concentrate on extracting and illuminating messages embedded some twenty-five hundred years ago. I contextualize passages in their historical setting (where that can be established) in order to discern the book's agenda. But I also explore what might have actually happened, aware of the hypothetical nature of many conclusions.

Each major unit in the commentary has the following sections:

Introduction and Structure
Translation
Notes
Comments

The "Introduction and Structure" sections in the commentary aim to orient the reader. The Notes offer close readings in consideration of a wide range of questions they pose.

Typically, the Notes address a sense unit before turning to individual terms. Special attention is paid to the ways in which terms are used elsewhere in the Bible, given the assumption that the semantic range of words is best indicated by how related texts use them. I include variants from the LXX and examples from 1 Esdras because these two Hellenistic works are the earliest available translations, appropriations, and responses to EN. They thereby potentially help us access contextual meanings.

The Comments integrate overarching issues and engage scholarly discussions that affect the unit as a whole. In citing scholarly studies, I try to represent a range of approaches, alternating between early and late interpreters. The excellent commentaries by Clines (1984), Gunneweg (1985), Williamson (1985), Blenkinsopp (1988), Grabbe (1998), Fried (2015a), Becking (2018), and Japhet (2019) have greatly influenced my work. Many other fine studies, too numerous to mention, are listed in the Bibliography.

This page intentionally left blank

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This page intentionally left blank

Ackerman, Susan
2008: "Household Religion, Family Religion, and Women's Religion in Ancient Israel." Pages 127–158 in J. Bodel and S. M. Olyan, eds. *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity.* Madden, MA: Blackwell.
Ackroyd, Peter R.
1967: "History and Theology in the Writings of the Chronicler." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 38: 501–15.
1972: "The Temple Vessels—A Continuity Theme." Pages 166–81 in G. W. Anderson, P. A. H. de Boer, G. R. Castellino, Henry Caelles, John Emerton, E. Neilson, H. G. May, and W. Zimmerli, eds. *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel.* VTSup 23. Leiden: Brill.
1977: "The Chronicler as Exegete." *JSOT* 2: 2–32.
1984: "The Jewish Community in Palestine in the Persian Period." Pages 130–61 in W. D. Davis and L. Finkelstein, eds. *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1988: "Problems in the Handling of Biblical and Related Sources in the Achaemenid Period." Pages 33–54 in Amélie Kuhrt and Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, eds. *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory. Proceedings of the London 1985 Achaemenid History Workshop.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
Adams, Samuel L.
2014: *Social and Economic Life in Second Temple Judah.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
Adler, Rachel
1993: "In Your Blood Live: Re-visions of a Theological Purity." *Tikkun* 8: 38–41.
Aharoni, Yohanan
1981: *Arad Inscriptions.* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
Albertz, Rainer
1993: *Old Testament Period Vol. II: From Exile to the Maccabees.* OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
2001: "An End to the Confusion? Why the Old Testament Cannot Be a Hellenistic Book!" Pages 30–46 in Lester L. Grabbe, ed. *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish*

Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period. JSOTSup 317; European Seminar in Historical Methodology 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

2018: "The Recent Discussion on the Formation of the Pentateuch/Hexateuch." *Hebrew Studies* 59: 65–92.

Albright, William F.

1921: "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler." *JBL* 40: 108–9.

1963: *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: An Historical Survey.* New York: Harper & Row.

Allrik, H. L.

1954: "The Lists of Zerubbabel (Nehemiah 7 and Ezra 2) and the Hebrew Numerical Notation." *BASOR* 136: 21–27.

Alstola, Tero

2018: "Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE." PhD diss., University of Helsinki.

2020: *Judeans in Babylonia: A Study of Deportees in the Sixth and Fifth Centuries BCE.* Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 109. Leiden: Brill.

Alt, Albrecht

1953: "Die Rolle Samarias bei der Entstehung des Judentums." Pages 316–37 in A. Alt, ed. *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel* 2. Munich: Beck.

Alter, Robert

1981: *The Art of Biblical Narrative.* New York: Basic Books.

2018: "Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 801–62 in *The Hebrew Bible. Vol. 3: The Writings.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Anderson, Cheryl

2009: "Reflections in an Interethnic/racial Era on Inter/ethnic/racial Marriage in Ezra." Pages 47–64 in Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Arendt, Hannah

1970: *On Violence.* New York: Harcourt.

Arnold, B. T.

1996: "The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible: Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel." *JNSL* 22: 1–15.

Avigad, Nahman

1976: "Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive." *Qedem* 4: 1–36.

Avigad, Nahman, and Benjamin Sass

1997: *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals.* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.

Azzoni, Annalisa

2013: *The Private Lives of Women in Persian Egypt.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Baden, Joel S.

2012: *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis.* Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Balcells Gallarreta, J. E.

2017: *Household and Family Religion in Persian-Period Judah: An Archaeological Approach.* Atlanta: SBL Press.

Baltzer, Klaus, and Peter Marinkovic
2014: "The Legal Capacity of Women in the Persian Period." Pages 41–51 in R. J. Bautch and T. Hubbard, eds. *The Book of Isaiah: Enduring Questions Answered Anew. Essays Honoring Joseph Blenkinsopp and His Contribution to the Study of Isaiah.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Barstad, Hans M.
1996: *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the "Exilic Period."* Oslo: Scandinavian Press.
Bartal, A.
1979: "Again—Who Was Sheshbazzar?" [in Hebrew]. *Beth Mikra* 24: 357–69.
Batten, Loring W.
1913: *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah.* International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark. 1949 ed.
Baumann, Gerd
1999: *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities.* New York: Routledge.
Bautch, Richard J.
2003: *Developments in Genre Between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament.* SBL Academia Biblica 7. Atlanta: SBL Press.
2008: "The Function of Covenant Across Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 8–24 in M. J. Boda and P. L. Reddit, eds. *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
2016: "Holy Seed: Ezra 9–10 and the Formation of the Pentateuch." Pages 525–42 in Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, eds. *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Israel, Europe, and North America.* FAT 111. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Bautch, R. J., and M. Lackowski, eds.
2018: *On Dating Biblical Texts to the Persian Period: Discerning Criteria and Establishing Epochs.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Becking, Bob
1999: "Continuity and Community: The Belief System in the Book of Ezra." Pages 256–75 in Becking and Korpel, eds.
2006: "We All Returned as One: Critical Notes on the Myth of a Mass Return." Pages 3–18 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
2018: *Ezra-Nehemiah.* Historical Commentary on the Old Testament. Leuven: Peeters.
Becking, Bob, and Marjo C. A. Korpel, eds.
1999: *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times.* Oudtestamentische Studiën 42. Leiden: Brill.
Bedford, Peter Ross
2001: *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah.* Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 65. Leiden: Brill.
2002: "Diaspora: Homeland Relations in Ezra-Nehemiah." *VT* 52: 147–65.
2007: "The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in Achaemenid Judah: Comparative Perspectives." Pages 3–20 in Moshe Bar-Anbar, Dalit Rom-Shiloni,

Emanuel Tov, and Nili Wazana, eds. *Shai le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, Its Exegesis and Its Language.* Jerusalem: Bialik Institute.

Ben Yashar, M.

1981: "On the Problem of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel" [in Hebrew]. *Beth Mikra* 88: 46–56.

Ben Zvi, Ehud

1995: "Inclusion in and Exclusion from Israel as Conveyed by the Use of the Term 'Israel' in Post-Monarchic Biblical Texts." Pages 95–149 in S. W. Holloway and L. K. Handy, eds. *The Pitcher Is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gosta W. Ahlstrom.* JSOTSup 190. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

1997: "The Urban Center of Jerusalem and the Development of the Literature of the Hebrew Bible." Pages 194–209 in W. E. Aufrecht, N. A. Mirau, and S. W. Gauley, eds. *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

2010: "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud." Pages 155–68 in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin, eds. *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts.* BZAW 404. New York: de Gruyter.

2016: "Renegotiating a Putative Utopia and the Stories of the Rejection of Foreign Wives in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 105–28 in S. J. Schweitzer and F. Uhlenbruch, eds. *Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.* London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.

2019: *Social Memory Among the Literati of Yehud.* BZAW 509. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Ben Zvi, Ehud, and Sylvie Honigman

2018: "Remembering Three Nehemiahs in Late Second Temple Times: Patterns and Trajectories in Memory Shaping." *JHS* 18: Article 10.

Ben Zvi, E., and C. Levin, eds.

2012: *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah.* FAT 85. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Berger, P. R.

1971: "Zu den Namen *ššbṣr* und *šn'ṣr*." *ZAW* 83: 98–100.

Bergren, Theodore A.

1998: "Ezra and Nehemiah Square Off in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha." Pages 340–65 in M. E. Stone and T. A. Bergren, eds. *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible.* Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.

Berman, Joshua

2006: "The Narratorial Voice of the Scribes of Samaria: Ezra 4:8–6:18 Reconsidered." *VT* 56: 313–26.

2007: "The Narratological Purpose of Aramaic Prose in Ezra 4.8–6.18." *Aramaic Studies* 5: 2–27.

2008: *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berquist, Jon L.

1995: *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

2006: "Constructions of Identity in Postcolonial Yehud." Pages 53–66 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.

Bertheau, Ernst

1862: *Die Bücher Esra, Nehemia und Ester.* Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament. Leipzig: Hirzel.

Betlyon, J. W.

1986: "The Provincial Government of Persian Period Judea and the Yehud Coins." *JBL* 105: 633–42.

1992: "Coinage." *ABD* 1: 1076–89.

Bianchi, Francesco

1994: "Le rôle de Zorobabel et de la dynastie davidique en Judée du VI e siècle au II e siècle." *Transeuphratène* 7: 153–65.

Bickerman, Elias J.

1946: "The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra 1." *JBL* 65: 249–75.

Bin-Nun, Y.

1976: "Gmir" [in Hebrew]. *Beth Mikra* 65: 296–302.

Blackwell, Christopher W.

2003: "The Assembly." In C. W. Blackwell, ed. *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy* (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife, eds., *The Stoa: A Consortium for Electronic Publication in the Humanities* [www.stoa.org]), edition of March 26, 2003.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph

1987: "The Mission of Udjahorresnet and Those of Ezra and Nehemiah." *JBL* 106: 409–21.

1988: *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary.* OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster.

1991: "Temple and Society in Achaemenid Judah." Pages 22–53 in P. R. Davies, ed.

2001: "Was the Pentateuch the Civic and Religious Constitution of the Jewish Ethnos in the Persian Period?" Pages 41–62 in Watts, ed.

2002: "The Bible, Archaeology and Politics; or The Empty Land Revisited." *JSOT* 2: 169–87.

2003: "Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period." Pages 93–107 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.

2010: "Footnotes to the Rescript of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11–26)." Pages 150–58 in P. R. Davies and D. V. Edelman, eds. *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe.* New York: T & T Clark.

2019: "Trito-Isaiah (Isaiah 56–66) and the Gôlāh Group of Ezra, Shecaniah, and Nehemiah (Ezra 7–Nehemiah 13): Is There a Connection?" *JSOT* 43: 661–77.

Bloch, Yigal

2018: *Alphabet Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform: Sēpiru Professionals in Mesopotamia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods.* Gorgias Studies in the Ancient Near East 11. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.

Blum, Erhard

1990: *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch.* BZAW 187. Berlin: de Gruyter.

2002: "Esra, die Mosestora und die persische Politik." Pages 231–56 in Reinhard G. Kratz, ed. *Religion und Religionkontakte in Zeitalter der Achämeniden.* Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 22. Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus.

Bocher, Efrat, and Oded Lipschits
2013: "The *yrslm* Stamp Impressions of Jar Handles: Distribution, Chronology, Iconography and Function." *Tel Aviv* 40: 99–116.
Boda, Mark J.
1999: *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9.* BZAW 277. Berlin: de Gruyter.
2009: "Identity and Empire, Reality and Hope in the Chronicler's Perspective." Pages 249–72 in Knoppers and Ristau, eds.
2012: "Flashforward: Future Glimpses in the Past of Ezra 1–6." Pages 247–60 in I. Provan and M. J. Boda, eds. *Let Us Go up to Zion: Essays in Honor of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday.* Leiden: Brill.
Boda, M. J., D. K. Falk, and R. A. Werline
2006–2008: *Seeking the Favor of God.* 3 vols. Atlanta: SBL Press.
Boda, Mark J., and Jamie Novotny, eds.
2010: *From the Foundation to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible.* AOAT 366. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
Boda, M. J., and P. L. Redditt, eds.
2008: *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader.* Hebrew Bible Monographs 17. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
Bodel, J., and S. M. Olyan
2008: *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity.* Madden, MA: Blackwell.
Boer, Roland
2005: "No Road: On the Absence of Feminist Criticism of Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 233–52 in T. Penner and C. V. Stichele, eds. *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse.* Leiden: Brill.
Böhler, Dieter
1997: *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras α und Esra-Nehemia: zwei Konzeptionen der Wiederherstellung Israels.* OBO 158. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Bolin, Thomas M.
1996: "When the End Is the Beginning: The Persian Period and the Origins of the Biblical Tradition." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 10: 3–15.
Bossman, D.
1979: "Ezra's Marriage Reform: Israel Redefined." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9: 32–38.
Bracke, John M.
1992: "Pashhur." *ABD* 5: 171–72.
Bracy, R.
1988: "An Examination of the Validity of a Fourth Century B.C. Date for Ezra and Nehemiah, and Its Significance." PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
Brett, Mark G.
2008: *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire.* The Bible in the Modern World 16. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
2016: *Political Trauma and Healing: Biblical Ethics for a Postcolonial World.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

2019: *Locations of God: Political Theology in the Hebrew Bible.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brett, Mark G., ed.

2002: *Ethnicity and the Bible.* Leiden: Brill.

Brettler, Marc Zvi

1999: "The New Biblical Historiography." Pages 43–50 in V. P. Long, ed. *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Briant, Pierre

1996: *Histoire de l'Empire perse: de Cyrus à Alexandre.* Paris: Fayard.

1999: "The Achaemenid Empire." Pages 105–28 in K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein, eds. *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2000: "Histoire impériale et histoire régionale: à propos de l'histoire de Juda dans l'empire Achéménide." Pages 235–45 in A. Lemaire and M. Saebø, eds. *Congress Volume Oslo 1988.* VTSup 80. Leiden: Brill.

2002: *The Persian Empire from Cyrus to Alexander.* Translated by P. T. Daniels. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Briend, J.

1990: "L'occupation de la Galilée occidentale à l'époque perse." *Transeuphratène* 2: 109–23.

1996: "L'édit de Cyrus et sa valeur historique." *Transeuphratène* 11: 33–44.

Briend, J., and J. Elayi

2000: "Introduction: Recherches pluridisciplinaires sur une province de l'empire achéménide." *Transeuphratène* 19: 9–12.

Bright, John

1981: *A History of Israel.* 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Westminster. Originally published in 1953.

Brown II, Philip A.

2005: "Nehemiah and Narrative Order in the Book of Ezra." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162: 175–94.

Buell, Denise Kimber

2000: "Ethnicity and Religion in Mediterranean Antiquity and Beyond." *Religious Studies Review* 26: 243–49.

Burn, A. R.

1985: *The Penguin History of Greece.* London: Penguin. Originally published in 1965.

Buster, Aubrey

2016: "Written Record and Membership in Persian Period Judah and Classical Athens." Pages 297–320 in Niall Slater, ed. *Voice and Voices in Antiquity.* Mnemosyne Supplements 396; Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World 11. Leiden: Brill.

Bynum, Caroline Walker

1987: *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* The New Historicism; Studies in Cultural Poetics. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cameron, A., and A. Kuhrt
1983: *Images of Women in Antiquity.* Detroit: Wayne State University.
Cameron, G. G.
1948: *Persepolis Treasury Tablets.* Oriental Institute of Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Camp, Claudia V.
1985: *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs.* Bible and Literature Series 11. Decatur, GA: Almond Press.
2000: *Wise, Strange and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible.* JSOTSup 320. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Carlson-Hasler, Laura
2020: *Archival Historiography in Jewish Antiquity.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Carr, David M.
1997: "Controversy and Convergence in Recent Studies of the Formation of the Pentateuch." *Religious Studies Review* 23: 22–31.
2011: *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Carroll, Robert
1998: "Exile? What Exile?" Pages 61–79 in Grabbe, ed.
Carter, Charles E.
1999: *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study.* JSOTSup 294. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
2016: "(Re)Defining 'Israel': The Legacy of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods." Pages 215–40 in Susan Niditch, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel.* Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
Cataldo, Jeremiah W.
2009: *Theocratic Yehud? Issues of Government in the Persian Period.* New York: T & T Clark.
Charlesworth, James H., ed.
1983: *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* Vol. 1. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
Childs, Brevard
1979: *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture.* Philadelphia: Fortress.
Clauss, Jan
2011: "Understanding the Mixed Marriages of Ezra-Nehemiah in the Light of Temple-Building and the Book's Concept of Jerusalem." Pages 108–31 in Frevel, ed.
Clines, D. A. J.
1981: "Nehemiah 10 as an Example of Early Jewish Biblical Exegesis." *JSOT* 21: 111–17.
1984: *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther: Based on the Revised Standard Version.* New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Morgan & Scott.
1989: "The Force of the Text: A Response to Tamara C. Eskenazi's 'From Text to Actuality.'" Pages 199–215 in J. C. Exum, ed. *Signs and Wonders: Biblical Texts in Literary Focus.* SBL Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

1993: "'Ezra' and 'Nehemiah.'" Pages 699–735 in Wayne A. Meeks, ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible.* New York: HarperCollins.

Cogan, M.

1988: "For We, like You, Worship Your God." *VT* 38: 286–92.

Coggins, R. J.

1975: *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered.* Growing Points in Theology. Louisville: John Knox.

1976: *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, O.

2013: *The Verbal Tense System in Late Biblical Hebrew Prose.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Cohen, Shaye J. D.

1983: "From the Bible to the Talmud: The Prohibition of Intermarriage." *Hebrew Annual Review* 7: 23–39.

1999: *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cohen, Steven M., and Jack Wertheimer

2020: "What Is So Great About Post-Ethnic Judaism"/"Whatever Happened to the Jewish People." Pages 285–88 in Michael Marmur and David Ellenson, eds. *American Jewish Thought Since 1943: Writings on Identity, Engagement, and Belief.* Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.

Cohn-Haft, Louis

1995: "Divorce in Classical Athens." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115: 1–14.

Collins, John J.

1998: "Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period." *International Rennert Guest Lecture Series* 1: 3–31.

2014: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible and Deutero-Canonical Books.* 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress.

2017: *The Invention of Judaism: Torah and Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy to Paul.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Conczorowski, Benedikt J.

2011: "All the Same Ezra? Conceptual Differences Between the Texts on Intermarriage in Genesis, Deuteronomy 7 and Ezra." Pages 89–108 in Frevel, ed.

Coogan, Michael D.

1974: "Life in Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century B.C." *Biblical Archaeologist* 37: 6–12.

1983: "Life in Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century B.C." Pages 249–56 in Edward F. Campbell, Jr., and David Noel Freedman, eds. *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader IV.* Sheffield: Almond Press.

Cook, John A.

2019: *Aramaic Ezra and Daniel: A Handbook on the Aramaic Text.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Cook, John M.

1983: *The Persian Empire.* New York: Schocken.

Cowley, A. E.
1923: *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford: Clarendon.
Cross, Frank M.
1973: "Notes on the Ammonite Inscription from Tell Sīrān." *BASOR* 212: 12–15.
1975: "A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration." *JBL* 94: 4–18.
Dandamayev (Dandamaev), M. A.
1969: "Achaemenid Babylonia." Pages 296–311 in I. M. Diakonoff, ed. *Ancient Mesopotamia: Socio-Economic History: A Collection of Studies by Soviet Scholars.* Moscow: Nauka.
1989: *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire.* Leiden: Brill.
Daniels, Dwight R.
1991: "The Composition of the Ezra-Nehemiah Narrative." Pages 311–28 in Dwight R. Daniels, Uwe Glessmer, and Martin Rösel, eds. *Ernten, was man sät: Festschrift für Klaus Koch zu seinem 65. Geburtstag.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
Davies, John K.
1977: "Athenian Citizenship: The Descent Group and the Alternatives." *Classical Journal* 73: 105–21.
Davies, Philip R.
1992: *In Search of Ancient Israel.* JSOTSup 148. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
1998: "Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?" Pages 128–38 in Grabbe, ed.
Davies, Philip R., ed.
1991: *Second Temple Studies I: Persian Period.* JSOTSup 117. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Davis, K., I. Rubin, I. Feldman, M. Krutzsch, H. Rimon, A. Justnes, T. Elgvin, and M. Langlois
2017: "Nine Dubious 'Dead Sea Scrolls' Fragments from the Twenty-First Century." *Dead Sea Discoveries* 24: 189–228.
Deist, Ferdinand E.
1997: "The Yehud Bible: A Belated Divine Miracle?" *JNSL* 23: 117–42.
De Moore, J. C.
1957: "Lexical Remarks Concerning YAHAD and YAHDAW." *VT* 7: 350–55.
Demsky, Aaron
1994: "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah? The Synchronistic Approach." *HUCA* 65: 1–20.
de Pury, A.
1995: "Terres d'exil et terres d'accueil. Quelques réflexions sur le judaïsme post-exilique face à la Perse et à l'Égypte." *Transeuphratène* 9: 25–34.
Dequeker, Luc
1993: "Darius the Persian and the Reconstruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 4, 24)." Pages 67–92 in J. Quaegebeur, ed. *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of April 1991.* Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 55. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oriëntalistiek.

1997: "Nehemiah and the Restoration of the Temple After the Exile." Pages 547–67 in M. Vervenne and J. Lust, eds. *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature: Festschrift C. H. W. Brekelmans.* Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Deutsch, R., and M. Heltzer

1998: "Numanistic Evidence from the Persian Period from the Sharon Plain (Pls. IV–V)." *Transeuphratène* 13: 17–20.

Deutsch, Robert, and André Lemaire

2000: *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection.* Tel Aviv: Archeological Center Publications.

Diebner, B. J.

1994: "Die Bedeutung der mesopotamischen 'Exilsgemeinde' (*galut*) fur die theologische Pragung der judischen Bibel." *Transeuphratène* 7: 123–42.

Dinur, U., and N. Feig

1993: "Eastern Part of the Map of Jerusalem." Pages 339–427 in I. Finkelstein and Y. Magen, eds. *Archaeological Survey of the Hill Country of Benjamin.* Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority.

Dion, P. E.

1983: "*šṣbṣr* and *ssnwry.*" *ZAW* 95: 111–12.

Dor, Yonina

2003: "The Composition of the Episode of the Foreign Women in Ezra IX–X." *VT* 53: 26–47.

2006: *HaOmnam Gurshu haNashim haNokhriot?* [Were the Foreign Women Really Expelled?] [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Magnes.

Douglas, Mary

2000: *Leviticus as Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2002: "Responding to Ezra: The Priests and the Foreign Wives." *Biblical Interpretation* 10: 1–23.

Driver, G. R.

1930: "I. Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament." *JTS* 31: 275–84.

1952: "Some Hebrew Medical Expressions." *VT* 65: 255–62.

1957: *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Dumbrell, W. J.

1986: "The Theological Intention of Ezra-Nehemiah." *Reformed Theological Review* 45: 65–72.

Dušek, Jan

2007: *Les manuscrits araméens du Wadi Daliyeh et la Samarie vers 450–332 av. J.-C.* Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 30. Leiden: Brill.

2014: "Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, Its History and Enigma of Origin." *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 3: 111–23.

Dyck, Jonathan E.

1998: *The Theocratic Ideology of the Chronicler.* Biblical Interpretation Series. Leiden: Brill.

2000: "Ezra 2 in Ideological Critical Perspective." Pages 129–45 in R. Carroll and M. Daniel, eds. *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

2002: "The Ideology of Identity in Chronicles." Pages 89–116 in Brett, ed.

Edelman, Diana
2005: *The Origins of the "Second" Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem.* London: Equinox.
2007: "The Settlement Patterns in Persian-Era Yehud." Pages 52–64 in Levin, ed.
2012a: "What Can We Know About the Persian-Era Temple at Jerusalem?" Pages 343–68 in Jens Kamlah, ed. *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.).* Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 41. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
2012b: "Hidden Ancestor Polemics in the Book of Genesis?" Pages 35–56 in Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak, eds. *Words, Ideas, World: Biblical Essays in Honour of Yairah Amit.* Hebrew Bible Monographs 40. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
Edenburg, Cynthia
2019: "'As Is Written in the Torah of Moses': The Form and Authority of 'Torah' in Chronicles." Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, November 23–26.
Ehrenberg, V.
1968: *From Solon to Socrates: Greek History and Civilization During the 6th and 5th Centuries BC.* London: Methuen.
Eisenstadt, S. N.
1979: "Observations and Queries About Sociological Aspects of Imperialism in the Ancient World." Pages 21–31 in M. T. Larsen, ed. *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires.* Mesopotamia Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 7. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.
Elayi, J.
1992a: "Réflexion sur la place de l'histoire dans la recherche sur la Transeuphratène achéménide." *Transeuphratène* 4: 73–80.
1992b: "Review of M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire.* Leiden/New York: København-Köln, 1989." *Transeuphratène* 5: 157–61.
2006: "An Updated Chronology of the Reigns of Phoenician Kings During the Persian Period (539–333 BCE)." *Transeuphratène* 32: 11–43.
Elayi, J., and J. Sapin
1991: *Nouveaux regards sur la Transeuphratène.* Turnhout: Brepols.
Ellison, H. L.
1981: "The Importance of Ezra." *Evangelical Quarterly* 53: 48–53.
Emery, D. C.
1987: "Ezra 4—Is Josephus Right After All?" *JNSL* 13: 33–44.
Eph'al, I.
1978: "The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th–5th Centuries B.C.: Maintenance and Cohesion." *Orientalia* 47: 74–90.
1998: "Changes in Palestine During the Persian Period in Light of Epigraphic Sources." *IEJ* 48: 106–19.
Eph'al, I., and J. Naveh
1996: *Aramaic Ostraca of the Fourth Century BC from Idumea.* Jerusalem: Magnes.
Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn
1986: "The Chronicler and the Composition of 1 Esdras." *CBQ* 48: 39–61.

1988a: *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah.* SBLMS 36. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
1988b: "The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Integrity of the Book." *JBL* 107: 641–56.
1989: "Ezra-Nehemiah: From Text to Actuality." Pages 165–97 in J. C. Exum, ed. *Signs and Wonders: Biblical Texts in Literary Focus.* SBL Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
1990: "The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Integrity of the Book." Pages 23–38 in J. I. Packer, ed. *The Best of Theology,* Vol. 4. Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today International.
1992a: "Out from the Shadows: Women in the Postexilic Era." *JSOT* 54: 25–43. Reprinted in Athalia Brenner, ed. *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings,* 252–71. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
1992b: "Sheshbazzar." *ABD* 5: 1207–9.
1992c: "Sophereth." *ABD* 6: 159.
1992d: "Tobiah." *ABD* 6: 584–85.
1993: "Current Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah and the Persian Period." *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 1: 59–86.
2001: "Nehemiah 9–10: Structure and Significance." *JHS* 3: Article 9.
2005: "Reflections on Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem.* In Conversation with Oded Lipschits." *JHS* 7: 11–16.
2006: "The Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah." Pages 509–29 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
2010: "Revisiting the Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah: A Prolegomenon." Pages 215–34 in Frank Ritchel Ames and Charles William Miller, eds. *Foster Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Kent Harold Richards.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
2014a: "Imagining the Other in the Construction of Judahite Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 230–56 in E. Ben Zvi and D. Edelman, eds. *Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period.* LHBOTS. London: T & T Clark.
2014b: "The Lives of Women in the Postexilic Era." Pages 11–31 in C. M. Maier and N. Calduch-Benages, eds. *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books.* Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. Atlanta: SBL Press.
2016: "The Flowering of Literature in the Persian Period: The Writings/Ketuvim." Pages 476–92 in Susan Niditch, ed. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel.* Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
Forthcoming(a): "Conflict over Marriage and the Holy in Ezra 9–10." In Deirdre N. Fulton, Kenneth Ristau, Jonathan Greer, and Margaret Cohen, eds., *The Formation of Biblical Texts: Chronicling the Legacy of Gary Knoppers.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Forthcoming(b): "The Political Theology of Ezra-Nehemiah." In Mark G. Brett and Rachelle Gilmour, eds. *Political Theologies in the Hebrew Bible.* Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplement Series. Paderborn: Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh.
Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky
2012: *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

Eskenazi, T. C., and E. Judd
1994: "Marriage to a Stranger in Ezra 9–10." Pages 266–85 in Eskenazi and Richards, eds.
Eskenazi, T. C., and K. H. Richards, eds.
1994: *Second Temple Studies 2: Temple and Community in the Persian Period.* JSOTSup 175. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
Eskenazi, T. C., and J. L. Wright
2015: "Contrasting Pictures of Intermarriage in Ruth and Nehemiah." TheTorah.com, www.thetorah.com/article/contrasting-pictures-of-intermarriage-in-ruth-and-nehemiah.
Falk, Z. W.
1959: "Ezra VII 26." *VT* 9: 88–89.
Farber, Zev
2013: "The Resumptive Repetition (Wiederaufnahme)." TheTorah.com, https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-resumptive-repetition-wiederaufnahme (updated 2020).
Farisani, Elelwani
2004: "The Composition and Date of Ezra-Nehemiah." *Old Testament Essays* 17: 208–30.
Faust, Avraham
2003: "Judah in the Sixth Century BCE: A Rural Perspective." *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 135: 37–53.
2007: "Settlement Dynamics and Demographic Fluctuations in Judah from the Late Iron Age to the Hellenistic Period and the Archaeology of Persian Period Yehud." Pages 23–51 in Levin, ed.
2012: *Judah in the Neo-Babylonian Period: The Archaeology of Desolation.* Atlanta: SBL Press.
2013: "Social, Cultural and Demographic Changes in Judah During the Transition from the Iron Age to the Persian Period and the Nature of the Society During the Persian Period." Pages 108–34 in J. U. Ro, ed. *From Judah to Judea: Socio-Economic Structure and Processes in the Persian Period.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
2018: "Forts or Agricultural Estates? Persian Period Settlement in the Territories of the Former Kingdom of Judah." *PEQ* 150: 34–59.
Fensham, F. C.
1975: "Medina in Ezra and Nehemiah." *VT* 25: 795–97.
1981: "Neh. 9 and Pss. 105, 106, 135 and 136. Post-exilic Historical Traditions in Poetic Form." *JNSL* 9: 35–51.
1982: *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.* New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Finkelstein, Israel
2008: "Archaeology and the List of Returnees in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah." *PEQ* 140: 1–10.
2009: "Persian Period Jerusalem and Yehud: A Rejoinder." *JHS* 9: Article 24.
2011: "Geographical List in Ezra and Nehemiah in the Light of Archaeology: Persian or Hellenistic?" Pages 49–69 in Grabbe and Lipschits, eds.

2018: *Hasmonean Realities Behind Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives.* Ancient Israel and Its Literature. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Finkelstein, Israel, Ido Koch, and Oded Lipschits

2011: "The Mound on the Mount: A Possible Solution to the Problem with Jerusalem." *JHS* 11: Article 12.

Finkelstein, Israel, and Lily Singer-Avitz

2009: "Reevaluating Bethel." *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 125: 33–48.

Fishbane, Michael

1988: *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Originally published in 1985.

Fitzmyer, J. A.

1971: "A Re-Study of an Elephantine Aramaic Marriage Contract (AP 15)." Pages 137–68 in H. Goedicke, ed. *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

1979: *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays.* Missoula, MT: Scholars Press.

Fleishman, Joseph

1995: "The Investigating Commission of Tattenai: The Purpose of the Investigation and its Results." *HUCA* 66: 81–102.

1998: "An Echo of Optimism in Ezra 6:19–22." *HUCA* 69: 15–29.

Fleming, D.

1986: "'House'/'City': An Unrecognized Parallel Word Pair." *JBL* 105: 689–93.

Folmer, Margaretha

1995: *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation.* Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 68. Leuven: Peeters.

2017: "Bactria and Egypt. Administration as Mirrored in the Aramaic Sources." Pages 413–54 in Jacobs, Henkelman, and Stolper, eds.

Fonrobert, Charlotte

2000: *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fox, Michael V., ed.

1988: *Temple in Society.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Freedman, David N.

1961: "The Chronicler's Purpose." *CBQ* 23: 436–42.

Frei, P.

1995: "Die persische Reighsorganisation: Ein Überblick." *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 1: 1–35.

2001: "Persian Imperial Authorization: A Summary." Pages 5–40 in Watts, ed. [English translation of Frei 1995].

Frevel, Christian, ed.

2011: *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period.* New York: T & T Clark.

Frevel, Christian, and Benedikt J. Conczorowski

2011: "Deepening the Water: First Steps to a Diachronic Approach on Intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible." Pages 15–45 in Frevel, ed.

Fried, Lisbeth S.
2000: "The Rise to Power of the Judean Priesthood: The Impact of the Achaemenid Empire." PhD diss., New York University.
2001: "'You Shall Appoint Judges': Ezra's Mission and the Rescript of Artaxerxes." Pages 63–89 in Watts, ed..
2002: "The Political Struggle of Fifth Century Judah." *Transeuphratène* 24: 9–21.
2003a: "The Land Lay Desolate: Conquest and Restoration in the Ancient Near East." Pages 21–54 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.
2003b: "A Silver Coin of Yohanan *hakkohen*." *Transeuphratène* 26: 65–85, pls. II–V.
2004: *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire.* Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 10. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
2005: "A Religious Association in Second Temple Judah? A Comment on Nehemiah 10." *Transeuphratène* 30: 77–96.
2006: "The *ʿAm Hāʾāretz* in Ezra 4:4 and Persian Imperial Administration." Pages 123–45 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
2007: "Did Second Temple High Priests Possess the Urim and Thummim?" *JHS* 7: Article 3.
2009: "The Concept of 'Impure Birth' in Fifth Century Athens and Judea." Pages 121–41 in R. H. Beal, S. Holloway, and J. Scurlock, eds. *In the Wake of Tikva Frymer-Kensky: Tikva Frymer-Kensky Memorial Volume.* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias.
2012a: "Ezra's Use of Documents in the Context of Hellenistic Rules of Rhetoric." Pages 11–26 in Kalimi, ed.
2012b: "The Law Triumphant: Another Look at 1 Esdras." Pages 132–38 in D. J. A. Clines, K. H. Richards, and J. L. Wright, eds. *Making a Difference: Essays on the Bible and Judaism in Honor of Tamara Cohn Eskenazi.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
2012c: "The Artaxerxes Correspondence of Ezra 4, Nehemiah's Wall, and Persian Provincial Administration." Pages 35–67 in A. M. Maeier, J. Magness, and L. H. Schiffman, eds. *"Go Out and Study the Land" (Judges 18:2): Archaeological, Historical and Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel.* Leiden: Brill.
2014: *Ezra and the Law.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
2015a: *Ezra: A Commentary.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
2015b: "No King in Judah? Mass Divorce in Judah and in Athens." Pages 381–401 in Jason M. Silverman and Caroline Waerzeggers, eds.
2015c: "Sukkot in Ezra-Nehemiah and the Date of the Torah." TheTorah.com, https://thetorah.com/article/sukkot-in-ezra-nehemiah-and-the-date-of-the-torah.
Fried, Lisbeth S., ed.
2011: *Was 1 Esdras First?: An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of 1 Esdras.* Ancient Israel and Its Literature 7. Atlanta: SBL Press.
Friedman, Richard Elliot
1987: *Who Wrote the Bible?* New York: Summit Books.

Fulton, Deirdre N.
2015: *Reconsidering Nehemiah's Judah: The Case of MT and LXX Nehemiah 11–12.* FAT 80. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Fulton, Deirdre N., and Gary N. Knoppers
2011: "Lower and Higher Criticism: The Case of 1 Esdras." Pages 11–29 in Fried, ed.
Gadot, Yuval
2015: "In the Valley of the King: Jerusalem's Rural Hinterland in the 8th–4th Centuries BCE." *Tel Aviv* 42: 3–26.
Galling, Kurt
1951a: "Kronzeugen des Artaxerxes?" *ZAW* 63: 66–74.
1951b: "The 'Gōlā-List' According to Ezra 2//Nehemiah 7." *JBL* 70: 149–58.
1954: *Die Bücher Chronik, Esra, Nehemia.* Das Alte Testament Deutsch 12. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
1964: *Studien zur Geschichte Israel sim persischen Zeitalter.* Tübingen: Mohr.
Garbini, G.
1988: *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel.* London: SCM Press.
1985a: "Aramaico *gemir* (Esdras 7, 12)." Pages 227–29 in Sandro Filippo Bondì, ed. *Studi in Onore di Edda Bresciani.* Pisa: Giardini Editori.
1985b: "La Lettera di Tab el (Ezra IV,7)." *Henoch* 7: 161–63.
Gelb, I. J.
1979: "Household and Family in Early Mesopotamia." Pages 1–98 in Lipinski, ed., Vol. 1.
Gertz, J. C., B. M. Levinson, D. Rom-Shiloni, and K. Schmid, eds.
2016: *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, North America and Israel.* FAT 111. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Gitay, Yehoshua
1997: "A Designed Anti-Rhetorical Speech: Ezra and the Question of Mixed Marriage." *JNSL* 23: 57–68.
Glover, Neil
2009: "Your People, My People: An Exploration of Ethnicity in Ruth." *JSOT* 33: 293–313.
Goldman, M. D.
1951: "Misunderstood Polaric Meaning of a Word." *Australian Biblical Review* 1: 61–63.
Gosse, B.
1995: "L'alliance avec Lévi et l'opposition entre les lignées royale et sacerdotale à l'époque perse." *Transeuphratène* 10: 29–33.
Goswell, Greg
2009: "The Order of the Books in the Greek Old Testament." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52: 449–66.
Gottwald, N. K.
1985: *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction.* Philadelphia: Fortress.
Grabbe, Lester L.
1987: "Josephus and the Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration." *JBL* 106: 231–45.

1991: "Reconstructing History from the Book of Ezra." Pages 98–106 in P. R. Davies, ed.
1994: "What Was Ezra's Mission?" Pages 286–99 in Eskenazi and Richards, eds.
1998: *Ezra-Nehemiah.* London/New York: Routledge.
1999: "Israel's Historical Reality After the Exile." Pages 9–32 in Becking and Korpel, eds.
2001a: "'Mind the Gaps': Ezra, Nehemiah and the Judean Restoration." Pages 83–104 in James M. Scott, ed. *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives.* Leiden: Brill.
2001b: "Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period." Pages 129–81 in Lester L. Grabbe, ed. *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period.* JSOTSup 317; European Seminar in Historical Methodology 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
2004: *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the 2nd Temple Period. I. Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah.* London: T & T Clark.
2006: "The 'Persian Documents' in the Book of Ezra: Are They Authentic?" Pages 531–70 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.

Grabbe, Lester L., ed.
1998: *Leading Captivity Captive: The "Exile" as History and Ideology.* LHBOTS. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Grabbe, Lester, and Oded Lipschits, eds.
2011: *Judah Between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400–200 BCE).* Library of Second Temple Studies 75. London: T & T Clark.

Graf, D. F.
1993: "The Persian Royal Road System in Syria-Palestine." *Transeuphratène* 6: 149–68.

Graham, M. P.
1985: "A Connection Proposed Between II Chr 24,26 and Ezra 9–10." *ZAW* 97: 256–58.

Grätz, Sebastian
2006: "Die Aramäische Chronik des Esrabuches und die Rolle der Ältesten in Esr 5–6." *ZAW* 118: 405–22.
2009: "Gottesgesetz und Königsgesetz: Esr 7 und die Autorisierung der Tora." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 106: 1–19.

Grayson, A. K.
1975: *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles.* Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin.
1992: "Mesopotamia, History of." *ABD* 4: 714–77.

Greenfield, J. C.
1990: "The Aramaic Legal Texts of the Achaemenian Period." *Transeuphratène* 3: 85–92.

Grintz, Y. M.
1957: "Hebrew Literature in the Persian Period." Pages 123–32 in *Sefer ha-Yovel LeRabbi Hanoch Albeck* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook.

Grol, H. W. M. van
1999: "Indeed, Servants We Are: Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9 and 2 Chronicles 12 Compared." Pages 209–27 in Becking and Korpel, eds.

Gropp, D., E. Schuller et al., eds.
2001. *Wadi Daliyeh II: The Samaria Papyri for Wadi Daliyeh.* Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (DJD) 28. Oxford: Clarendon.
Gunneweg, A. H. J.
1982: "Die aramäische und die hebräische Erzahlung uber die nachexilische Restauration—ein Vergleich." *ZAW* 94: 299–302.
1983: "ʿAM HAʿAREṢ—A Semantic Revolution." *ZAW* 95: 437–40.
1985: *Esra.* Kommentar zum Alten Testament XIX/I. Stuttgart: Gerd Mohn.
1987: *Nehemia.* Kommentar zum Alten Testament XIX/II. Stuttgart: Gerd Mohn.
Gzella, Holger
2015: *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam.* Handbook of Oriental Studies 111. Leiden: Brill.
Hagedorn, Anselm C.
2007: "Local Law in an Imperial Context: The Role of Torah in the (Imagined) Persian Period." Pages 57–79 in Knoppers and Levinson, eds.
Hall, Jonathan
2000: *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Originally published in 1997.
Hallock, R. T.
1969: *Persepolis Fortification Tablets.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.
1985: "The Evidence of the Persepolis Tablets." Pages 588–609 in I. Gershevitch, ed. *Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 2: Median and Achaemenian Periods.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Halpern, B.
1990: "A Historiographic Commentary on Ezra 1–6: A Chronological Narrative and Dual Chronology in Israelite Historiography." Pages 81–142 in W. H. Propp, B. Halpern, and D. N. Freedman, eds. *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters.* Biblical and Judaic Studies 1. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Hanson, Paul D.
1987: "Israelite Religion in the Early Postexilic Period." Pages 485–508 in P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride, eds. *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross.* Philadelphia: Fortress.
Haran, Menachem
1983: "Book-Scrolls at the Beginning of the Second Temple Period: The Transition from Papyrus to Skins." *HUCA* 54: 111–22.
1986: "Explaining the Identical Lines at the End of Chronicles and the Beginning of Ezra." *Bible Review* 2: 18–20.
Harper, P. O., J. Aruz, and F. Tallon, eds.
1992: *The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Harrington, Hannah K.
2008: "Holiness and Purity in Ezra–Nehemiah." Pages 98–116 in Boda and Redditt, eds.
2013: "The Use of Leviticus in Ezra-Nehemiah." *JHS* 13: Article 3.

Harris, Rivka
1990: "The Female 'Sage' in Mesopotamian Literature (with an Appendix on Egypt)." Pages 3–17 in J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue, eds. *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Hausmann, Jutta
1987: *Israels Rest: Studein zur Selfverständnis der nachexilischen Gemeinde.* BWANT 124. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
Hayes, Christine E.
2002: *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Hays, Christopher B.
2008: "The Silence of the Wives: Bakhtin's Monologism and Ezra 7–10." *JSOT* 33: 59–80.
Heckl, Raik
2018: "The Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah as a Testimony for the Competition Between the Temple in Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim in the Early Years of the Seleucid Rule over Judah." Pages 115–32 in Kartveit and Knoppers, eds.
Heichelheim, Fritz M.
1951: "Ezra's Palestine and Periclean Athens." *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesseschichte* 3: 251–53.
Heltzer, Michael
1986–1989: "A New Approach to the Problem of the 'Foreign Wives' in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah" [in Hebrew]. *Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Research* 10: 83–92.
1989: "The Tell el-Mazar Inscription No. 7 and Some Historical and Literary Problems of the Vth Satrapy." *Transeuphratène* 1: 111–18.
1992: "A Recently Published Babylonian Tablet and the Province of Judah After 516 B.C.E." *Transeuphratène* 5: 57–61.
2008: *The Province of Judah and Jews in Persian Times.* Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication.
Henkelman, Wouter F. M.
2017: "Imperial Signature and Imperial Paradigm: Achaemenid Administrative Structure and System Across and Beyond the Iranian Plateau." Pages 45–256 in Jacobs, Henkelman, and Stolper, eds.
2018: "Precious Gifts: Achaemenid Estates and Domains in Times of War and Peace." *Studia Iranica Cahier* 62: 13–66.
Hensel, Benedikt
2016: *Juda und Samaria: Zum Verhältnis zweier nach-exilischer Yahwismen.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
2018: "Ethnic Fiction and Identity-Formation: A New Explanation for the Background of the Question of Intermarriage in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 133–50 in Kartveit and Knoppers, eds.
2020: "Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles—New Insights in the Early History of Samari(t)an-Jewish Relations." *Religions* 11: 1–24.

Hensley, L. V.
1977: "The Official Persian Documents in the Book of Ezra." PhD diss., University of Liverpool.
Herr, Larry G.
1993: "What Ever Happened to the Ammonites?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19: 26, 28–35.
Herzog, Ze'ev
1997: *Archaeology of the City: Urban Planning in Ancient Israel and Its Social Implications.* Monograph Series of the Institute of Archaeology 13. Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University.
Hjelm, Ingrid
2000: *The Samaritans and Early Judaism: A Literary Analysis.* JSOTSup 303. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
2004: *Jerusalem's Rise to Sovereignty: Zion and Gerizim in Competition.* London: T & T Clark.
Hoffner, H. A.
1975: "Bayith." Pages 107–16 in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Hoglund, Kenneth G.
1992: *Achaemenid Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah.* SBLDS 125. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
Holm, Tawny L.
2017: "Nanay and Her Lover: An Aramaic Sacred Marriage Text from Egypt." *JNES* 76: 1–37.
Holmgren, F. C.
1987: *Israel Alive Again: A Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.* International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
1992: "Faithful Abraham and the 'amana Covenant." *ZAW* 104: 249–54.
Hölscher, Gustav
1923: *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia.* HAT 2. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Holtz, Shalom E.
2009: *Neo-Babylonian Court Procedure.* Cuneiform Monographs 38. Leiden: Brill.
Homès-Fredericq, D.
1996: "Influences diverses en Transjordanie à l'époque achéménide." *Transeuphratène* 11: 63–76.
Hoonacker, A. van
1890: "Néhémie et Esdras: nouvelle hypothése sur la chronologie de l'époque de la restauration." *Muséon* 9: 151–84, 317–51, 389–401.
1901: "Notes sur l'histoire de la restauration juive après l'exil de Babylone." *Revue Biblique* 10: 175–199.
1923: "La succession chronologique Néhémie–Esdras." *Revue Biblique* 32: 481–94.
Houtman, Cornelis
1981: "Ezra and the Law: Observations of the Supposed Relation Between Ezra and the Pentateuch." Pages 91–115 in *Remembering All the Way . . . : A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of*

the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland. Old Testament Studies 21. Leiden: Brill.

Hunt, Alice

2006: *Missing Priests: The Zadokites in Tradition and History*. New York: T & T Clark.

Hurowitz, Victor (Avigdor)

1992: *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings.* JSOTSup 115. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

1998: "Notes on a Recently Published Administrative Document." *IEJ* 48: 132–35.

Hutton, Jeremy M.

2011: "The Levitical Diaspora (II): Modern Perspectives on the Levitical Cities Lists (a Review of Opinions)." Pages 45–81 in Leuchter and Hutton, eds.

In der Smitten, W. Th.

1973: *Esra: Quellen, Überlieferungn und Geschichte.* Assen: Van Gorcum.

Ishida, T.

1979: "The Structure and Historical Implications of the Pre-Israelite Nations." *Biblica* 60: 461–90.

Jacobs, Bruno, Wouter F. M. Henkelman, and Matthew W. Stolper, eds.

2017: *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich/Administration in the Achaemenid Empire.* Classica et Orientalia 17. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Jacobs, Sandra

2020: "Review of Bloch, *Alphabet Scribes in the Land of Cuneiform.*" *Review of Biblical Literature,* March 12.

Janzen, David

2000: "The 'Mission' of Ezra and the Persian-Period Temple Community." *JBL* 119: 619–43.

2002: *Witch-Hunts, Purity and Social Boundaries: The Expulsion of the Foreign Women in Ezra 9–10.* JSOTSup 350. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

2008: "The Cries of Jerusalem: Ethnic, Cultic, Legal, and Geographic Boundaries in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 117–35 in Boda and Redditt, eds.

2016: "A Colonized People: Persian Hegemony, Hybridity, and Community Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah." *Biblical Interpretation* 24: 27–47.

Japhet, Sara

1968: "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemia [*sic*] Investigated Anew." *VT* 18: 330–71.

1982: "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel: Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra-Nehemiah." *ZAW* 94: 66–98.

1983a: "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel: Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra-Nehemiah." *ZAW* 95: 219–29.

1983b: "People and Land in the Restoration Period." Pages 103–25 in C. Strecker, ed. *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit.* Göttinger theologische Arbeiten 25. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

1988: "Law and 'The Law' in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 99–115 in Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, ed. *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies. Panel Sessions: Bible Studies and the Ancient Near East.* Jerusalem: Magnes.

1989: *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought.* Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum 9. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. Originally published in Hebrew, 1977.

1991a: "The Relationship Between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 298–313 in J. A. Emerton, ed. *Congress Volume Leuven 1989.* VTSup 43. Leiden: Brill.

1991b: "The Temple in the Restoration Period: Reality and Ideology." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 44: 195–251.

1991c: "'History' and 'Literature' in the Persian Period: The Restoration of the Temple." Pages 174–88 in M. Cogan and I. Epha'al, eds. *Ah, Assyria . . . : Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor.* Scripta Hierosolymitana. Jerusalem: Magnes.

1993: *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary.* OTL. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.

1994: "Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 189–216 in Eskenazi and Richards, eds.

1995: "L'historiographie post-exilique: comment et pourquoi?" Pages 123–52 in Albert de Pury, Thomas Romer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi, eds. *Israel construit son histoire: l'historiographie deutéronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes.* Le monde de la Bible 34. Geneva: Labor et Fides.

2004: "The Concept of 'Remnant' in the Restoration Period: On the Vocabulary of Self Definition." Pages 240–61 in L.-H. Hossfeld and L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, eds. *Das Manna fallt auch heute noch/The Manna Still Falls Today: Contributions to the History and Theology of the Old, First Testament. Festschrift for Erich Zenger.* Freiburg: Herder.

2005: "The Ritual of Reading Scripture (Nehemiah 8:1–12)." Pages 175–90 in R. I. Thelle, T. Storedalen, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History.* VTSup 168. Leiden: Brill.

2006: *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah: Collected Studies on the Restoration Period.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

2007: "The Expulsion of the Foreign Women (Ezra 9–10): The Legal Basis, Precedents, and Consequences for the Definition of Jewish Identity." Pages 141–61 in F. Hartenstein and M. Pietsch, eds. *"Sieben Augen auf einem Stein" (Sach 3,9): Studien zur Literatur des Zweiten Tempels. Festschrift für Ina-Plein zum 65. Geburtstag.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

2013: "I Esdras." Pages 140–210 in L. H. Feldman, J. L. Kugel, and L. H. Schiffman, eds. *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture,* Vol. 1. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

2016: "What May Be Learned from Ezra-Nehemiah About the Composition of the Pentateuch?" Pages 543–60 in Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid, eds.

2019: *Commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah* [in Hebrew]. Mikra Leyisrael. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Press.

Jerusalmi, Isaac

1978: *The Aramaic Sections of Ezra and Daniel.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion.

Joannès, F., and A. Lemaire

1999: "Trois tablettes cunéiformes à onomastique ouest sémitique." *Transeuphratène* 17: 17–34.

Johnson, M. Willa
1995: "Ethnicity in Persian Yehud: Between Anthropological Analysis and Ideological Criticism." Pages 177–86 in E. H. Lovering, ed. *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers: 131st Annual Meeting, November 18–21, 1995, Philadelphia Marriott and Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.
1999: "The Holy Seed Has Been Defiled." PhD diss., Vanderbilt University.
2011: *The Holy Seed Has Been Defiled: The Interethnic Dilemma in Ezra 9–10.* Hebrew Bible Monograph 33. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
Jones, Christopher M.
2015: "Seeking the Divine, Divining the Seekers: The Status of Outsiders Who Seek Yahweh in Ezra 6:21." *JHS* 15, no. 5: 1–23.
2018: "Embedded Written Documents as Colonial Mimicry in Ezra-Nehemiah." *Biblical Interpretation* 26: 158–81.
Jursa, Michael
2007: "The Transition of Babylonia from Neo-Babylonian Empire to Achaemenid Rule." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 136: 73–94.
2009: "On Aspects of Taxation in Achaemenid Babylonia: New Evidence from Borsippa." Pages 237–68 in Pierre Briant and Michel Chauveau, eds. *Organisation des pouvoirs et contacts culturels dans les pays de l'empire achaeménide.* Persika 14. Paris: de Boccard.
2010: *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC. Economic Geography, Economic Mentalities, Agriculture, the Use of Money and the Problem of Economic Growth.* Alten Orient und Altes Testament 377. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
2011: "Taxation and Service Obligations in Babylonia from Nebuchadnezzar to Darius and the Evidence for Darius' Tax Reforms." Pages 431–48 in R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler, eds. *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich/ Herodotus and the Persian Empire. Akten des 3. Internationalen Kolloquiums zum Thema Vorderasiien im Spannungsfeld klassischer und altorientalischer Uberlieferungen Innsbruck, 24–28. November 2008.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
Kalimi, Isaac, ed.
2012: *New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah: History and Historiography, Text, Literature, and Interpretation.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Kalimi, Isaac, and James D. Purvis
1994a: "King Jehoiachin and the Vessels of the Lord's House in Biblical Literature." *CBQ* 56: 449–57.
1994b: "The Hiding of the Temple Vessels in Jewish and Samaritan Literature." *CBQ* 56: 679–85.
Kapelrud, Arvid S.
1944: *The Question of Authorship in the Ezra Narrative: A Lexical Investigation.* Oslo: I Kommisjon Jacob Dybwad.
Karrer, Christine
2001: *Ringen um die Verfassung Judas: Studie zu den theologisch-politischen Vorstellungen im Esra-Nehemia-Buch.* BZAW 308. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Kartveit, Magnar
2009: *The Origins of the Samaritans.* VTSup 128. Leiden: Brill.
Kartveit, Magnar, and Gary N. Knoppers, eds.
2018: *The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans.* Berlin: de Gruyter.
Kaufman, Ivan T.
1997: "Samaria Ostraca." Pages 468–69 in Eric M. Meyers, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, Vol. 4. New York: Oxford University Press.
Kaufmann, Yehezkel
1977: *History of the Religion of Israel, Vol. 4: From the Babylonian Captivity to the End of Prophecy.* Translated by C. W. Efroymson. New York: Ktav.
Keel, Othmar, and Silvia Schroer
1985: *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel,* Vol. 1. OBO 67. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Kellermann, Ulrich
1967: *Nehemia: Quellen Überlieferung und Geschichte.* Berlin: Verlag Alfred Topelmann.
1968: "Erwägungen zum Problem Esradatierung." *ZAW* 80: 55–87.
Kidner, D.
1979: *Ezra and Nehemiah.* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
Kiel, Yishai
2017: "Reinventing Mosaic Torah in Ezra-Nehemiah in the Light of the Law (Data) of Ahura Mazda and Zarathustra." *JBL* 136: 323–45.
Klawans, Jonathan
2000: *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kleber, Kristin
2011: "Neither Slave nor Truly Free: The Status of the Dependent Babylonian Temple Households." Pages 101–11 in Laura Culbertson, ed. *Slaves and Households in the Near East.* Oriental Institute Seminars 7. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Klein, Ralph W.
1976: "Ezra and Nehemiah in Recent Studies." Pages 361–76 in F. M. Cross, Jr., W. E. Lemke, and P. D. Miller, eds. *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
1999: "The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 661–851 in Ralph W. Klein, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible* 3. Nashville: Abingdon.
Kletter, Raz
1999: "Pots and Polities: Material Remains of Late Iron Age Judah in Relation to Its Political Borders." *BASOR* 314: 19–44.
Knauf, E. A.
1990: "The Persian Administration in Arabia." *Transeuphratène* 2: 201–17.
2006: "Bethel. The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature." Pages 291–349 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.

Knoll, Israel
2008: *Where Are We From? The Genetic Code of the Bible* [in Hebrew]. Tel Aviv: Devir.
Knoppers, Gary N.
1999: "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood." *JBL* 118: 49–72.
2003: "The Relationship of the Priestly Genealogies to the History of the High Priesthood in Jerusalem." Pages 109–33 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.
2004a: *Chronicles 1–9.* AB 12. New York: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
2004b: "In Search of Post-Exilic Israel: Samaria After the Fall of the Northern Kingdom." Pages 150–80 in Jon Day, ed. *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel.* Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar. London: T & T Clark.
2005a: "Projected Age Comparison of the Levitical Townlists: Divergent Theories and Their Significance." *Textus* 22: 21–63.
2005b: "Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion: A Study in the Early History of the Samaritans and Jews." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 34: 309–38.
2006: "Revisiting the Samarian Question in the Persian Period." Pages 265–89 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
2007a: "Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy without or within?" Pages 305–31 in Lipschits, Knoppers, and Albertz, eds.
2007b: "Expatriates, Repatriates, and the Question of Zion's Status—In Conversation with Melody D. Knowles, *Centrality Practices: Jerusalem in the Religious Practices of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (Archaeology and Biblical Studies 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006)." *JHS* 7: Article 7.
2009a: "Ethnicity, Genealogy, Geography and Change: The Judean Communities of Babylon and Jerusalem in the Story of Ezra." Pages 147–71 in Knoppers and Ristau, eds.
2009b: "Beyond Jerusalem and Judah: The Mission of Ezra in the Province of Transeuphrates." *Eretz-Israel* 21: 78–87.
2010: "Aspects of Samaria's Religious Culture During the Early Hellenistic Period." Pages 159–74 in P. R. Davies and D. V. Edelman, eds. *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe.* New York: T & T Clark.
2011a: "Exile, Return and Diaspora: Expatriates and Repatriates in Late Biblical Literature." Pages 29–61 in Louis Jonker, ed. *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiations in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
2011b: "Parallel Torahs and Inner-Scriptural Interpretation: The Jewish and Samaritan Pentateuchs in Historical Perspective." Pages 507–31 in Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, eds. *The Pentateuch: International Perspective on Current Research.* FAT 78. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
2011c: "'Married into Moab': The Exogamy Practiced by Judah and His Descendants in the Judahite Lineages." Pages 170–95 in Frevel, ed.
2013: *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2015: "The Construction of Judean Diasporic Identity in Ezra-Nehemiah." *JHS* 15: Article 3.

2019: *Judah and Samaria in Postmonarchic Times: Essays on Their Histories and Literatures.* FAT 129. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Knoppers, Gary N., and Paul B. Harvey, Jr.
2007: "The Pentateuch in Ancient Mediterranean Context: The Publication of Local Lawcodes." Pages 105–41 in Knoppers and Levinson, eds.

Knoppers, Gary N., and Bernard M. Levinson, eds.
2007: *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Knoppers, Gary N., and Kenneth A. Ristau, eds.
2009: *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Knowles, Melody D.
2004: "Pilgrimage Imagery in the Returns in Ezra." *JBL* 123: 57–74.
2006: *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period.* Atlanta: SBL Press.

Koch, Klaus
1974: "Ezra and the Origins of Judaism." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 19: 173–97.

Kochman, Michael
1982: "'Yehud Medinta' in the Light of the Seal Impressions YHWD-PWH." *Cathedra for the History of Israel and Its Yishuv* 24: 3–30.

Kochman, Michael, and M. Heltzer
1985: *Encyclopedia Olam Hatanakh: The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* [in Hebrew]. Ramat Gan: Revivim.

Koltun-Fromm, Naomi
2010: *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kraeling, Emil G.
1953: *Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kraemer, David
1993: "On the Relationship of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah." *JSOT* 59: 73–92.

Kraft, Robert A.
1979: "'Ezra' Materials in Judaism and Christianity." Available at http://ccat.sas.upen.edu/rak//publics/judaism/Ezra.htm. Originally pages 119–36 in H. Temporini and W. Haase, eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der Neueren Forschung* II. *Principat* 19.1 *Religion (Judentum: Allgemeines; Palaestinishes Judentum)*, edited by W. Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Kratz, Reinhard G.
2000: *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments: Grundwissen der Bibelkritik.* UTB 2157. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
2005: *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament.* Translated by John Bowden. London: T & T Clark. Originally published in German, 2000.
2006: "The Second Temple of Jeb and of Jerusalem." Pages 247–64 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.

2007: "Temple and Torah: Reflecting on the Legal Status of the Pentateuch Between Elephantine and Qumran." Pages 77–103 in Knoppers and Levinson, eds.

Krause, Joachim J., Omar Sergi, and Kristin Weingart

2020: *Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of Monarchy in Israel: Biblical and Archaeological Perspectives.* Ancient Israel and Its Literature 40. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Kreissing, Heinz

1973: *Die Sozialökonomische Situation in Juda zur Achämenidzeit.* Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Kuhrt, Amélie

1982: "Assyrian and Babylonian Traditions in Classical Sources: A Synthesis." Pages 539–54 in Hans-Jörg Nissen and Johannes Renger, eds. *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im Alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 1. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

1983: "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy." *JSOT* 25: 83–97.

2007: *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period.* New York: Routledge.

Kutscher, E. Y.

1960–1961: "*Phw'* and Its Cognates." *Tarbiz* 30: 112–19.

Laato, Antti

1994: "The Levitical Genealogies in 1 Chronicles 5–6 and the Formation of Levitical Ideology in Post-exilic Judah." *JSOT* 62: 77–99.

Laird, Donna

2016: *Negotiating Power in Ezra-Nehemiah.* Ancient Israel and Its Literature 26. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Lange, Armin

2005: "Authoritative Literature and Scripture in the Chronistic Corpus: The Use of בותכ-Formulas in Ezra-Nehemiah and 1–2 Chronicles." Pages 29–52 in Mauro Perani, ed. *"The Words of a Wise Man's Mouth Are Gracious" (Qoh 10,12). Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday.* Studia Judaica 32. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Langille, Tim

2015: "Hybrids, Purification, and Multidimensional Memory in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 375–86 in I. D. Wilson and D. V. Edelman, eds. *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift for Ehud Ben Zvi.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Laperrousaz, E. M.

1989: "Jerusalem à l'époque perse (étendue et statut)." *Transeuphratène* 1: 55–64.

1990: "Quelques remarques sur le tracé de l'enceinte de la ville et du temple de Jérusalem à l'époque perse." *Syria* 67: 609–31.

Lau, Peter H. W.

2009: "Gentile Incorporation into Israel in Ezra-Nehemiah?" *Biblica* 90: 356–73.

Lebram, J. C. H.

1987: "Die Traditionsgeschichte der Esragestalt und die Frage nach dem Historischen Esra." Pages 103–38 in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, ed. *Achaemenid History,* Vol. 1. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.

Lecoq, Pierre
1997: *Les inscriptions de la Perse Achémenide: Traduit du vieux perse, de l'élamite, du babylonien et de l'araméen.* Paris: Gallimard.
Lee, John W.
2012: *The Persian Empire.* Chantilly, VA: Great Courses.
Lee, Kyong-Jin
2011: *The Authority and Authorization of the Torah in the Persian Period.* Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 64. Leuven: Peeters.
Lehmann, Gunnar
2014: "The Levant in the Persian Period." Pages 825–51 in M. L. Steiner and A. E. Killebrew, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant: c. 8000–332 BCE.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Leith, Mary Joan Winn
1997: *Discoveries in the Judean Desert 24: Wadi Daliyeh I: The Wadi Daliyeh Seal Impressions.* Oxford: Clarendon.
Lemaire, André
1977: *Inscriptions Hébraïques 1: Les Ostraca.* Paris: Cerf.
1989: "Les inscriptions palestiniennes d'époque perse: un bilan proviso ire." *Transeuphratène* 1: 87–104.
1990: "Populations et territoires de la Palestine à l'époque perse." *Transeuphratène* 3: 31–74.
1994: "Les transformations politiques et culturelles de la Transjordanie au VI e siècle av. J.-C." *Transeuphratène* 8: 9–27.
1995: "La fin de la première période perse en Égypte et la chronologie judéenne vers 400 av. J.-C." *Transeuphratène* 9: 51–61.
1997: "Nouvelles données épigraphiques sur l'époque royale Israélite." *Revue des études juives* 156: 445–61.
1999a: "Épigraphie." *Transeuphratène* 17: 111–16.
1999b: "Le *hérem* dans le monde nord-ouest sémitique." Pages 79–92 in L. Nehmé, ed. *Antiquités sémitiques IV: Guerre et conquête dans le proche-orient ancient.* Paris: Maisonneuve.
2000: "L'économie de l'Idumée d'après *ostraca* araméens." *Transeuphratène* 19: 131–43.
2015: *Levantine Epigraphy and History in the Achaemenid Period (539–332 BCE): The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 2013.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Lemaire, André, and Hélène Lozachmeur
1987: "Birah/Birta' en araméen." *Syria* 64: 261–66.
Lemche, Niels Peter
1988: *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society.* Biblical Seminar 5. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
Lemos, T. M.
2010: *Marriage Gifts and Social Change in Ancient Palestine.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Lerner, Y.
1982: "*Lemibne/Lemibneya/Libbene*" [in Hebrew]. *Les* 47: 62–65.

Leuchter, Mark
2009: "Ezra's Mission and the Levites of Casiphia." Pages 173–95 in Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A. Ristau, eds. *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
2010: "The Levites in Exile: A Response to L. S. Tiemeyer." *VT* 60: 583–90.
Leuchter, Mark, and Jeremy Hutton, eds.
2011: *Levites and Priests in Biblical Tradition and History*. Ancient Israel and Its Literature 9. Atlanta: SBL Press.
Levenson, Jon D.
1976: *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48.* Harvard Semitic Monographs 10. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press.
Levin, Yigal
2018: "Why Did Zerubbabel's Adversaries Emphasize Their Foreign Origins?" Pages 91–99 in Bautch and Lackowski, eds.
Levin, Yigal, ed.
2007: *A Time of Change: Judah and Its Neighbours in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods.* Library of Second Temple Studies 65. London: T & T Clark.
Levine, B. A.
1963: "The Netinim." *JBL* 82: 207–12.
1969: "Notes on Hebrew Ostracon from Arad." *IEJ* 19: 49–51.
1974: *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel.* Leiden: Brill.
Levinson, Bernard
1997: *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Lipinski, E.
1981: "The Wife's Right to Divorce in the Light of an Ancient Near Eastern Tradition." *Jewish Law Review* 4: 9–27.
1989: "'Celleriers' de la province de Juda." *Transeuphratène* 1: 107–9.
1991: "Marriage and Divorce in the Judaism of the Persian Period." *Transeuphratène* 4: 63–71.
Lipinski, E., ed.
1979: *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 10th to the 14th of April 1978,* Vols. 1–2. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 5. Leuven: Department Oriëntalistiek.
Lipschits, Oded
1999: "The History of the Benjamin Region under Babylonian Rule." *Tel Aviv* 26: 155–90.
2000: "Literary and Ideological Aspects in Nehemiah 11." *JBL* 121: 423–40.
2003: "Demographic Changes in Judah Between the Seventh and the Fifth Century B.C.E." Pages 323–76 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.
2005: *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

2006: "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E." Pages 19–52 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.

2009: "Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations." *JHS* 9: Article 20.

2011a: "Persian Period Judah: A New Perspective." Pages 187–211 in L. Jonkers, ed. *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiations in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

2011b: "Shedding New Light on the Dark Years of the 'Exilic Period': New Studies, Further Elucidation, and Some Questions Regarding the Archaeology of Judah as an 'Empty Land.'" Pages 57–90 in B. Kelle, F. R. Ames, and J. L. Wright, eds. *Interpreting Exile.* Atlanta: SBL Press.

2012a: "Nehemiah 3: Sources, Composition, and Purpose." Pages 73–99 in Kalimi, ed.

2012b: "Archaeological Facts, Historical Speculations and the Date of the LMLK Storage Jars: A Rejoinder to David Ussishkin." *JHS* 12: Article 4.

2015: "The Rural Economy of Judah During the Persian Period and the Settlement History of the District System." Pages 237–64 in M. L. Miller, E. Ben Zvi, and G. N. Knoppers, eds. *The Economy of Ancient Judah in Its Historical Context.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

2017: "Bethel Revisited." Pages 233–46 in O. Lipschits, Y. Gadot, and M. J. Adams, eds. *Rethinking Israel: Studies in the History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel in Honor of Israel Finkelstein.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

2019a: "Materialkultur, Verwaltung und Wirtschaft in Juda während der Perserzeit und die Rolle des Jerusalemer Tempels." Pages 185–208 in R. Achenbach, ed. *Persische Reichspolitik und lokale Heiligtümer: Beiträge einer Tagung des Exzellenzclusters "Religion und Politik in Vormoderne und Moderne," vom 24.–26. Februar 2016 in Münster.* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 25. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

2019b: "The Date, Development Processes, and Formation of Sukkot Feast Customs During the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Period" [in Hebrew]. *Beth Miqra* 64: 286–310.

2021: "The 'Founding Story' and 'Bill of Rights' of the Family of Barzillai the Gileadite in Jerusalem." Pages 85–97 in F. Čapek and P. Sláma, eds. *"And God Saw That It Was Good" (Gen 1: 12): Concept of Quality in Archaeology, Philology, and Theology.* Münster: LIT.

Lipschits, O., and Blenkinsopp, J., eds.

2003: *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Lipschits, O., Y. Gadot, and D. Langgut

2012: "The Riddle of Ramat Rahel: The Archaeology of a Royal Persian Period Edifice." *Transeuphratène* 41: 57–79.

Lipschits, O., G. Knoppers, and R. Albertz, eds.

2007: *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Lipschits, O., G. Knoppers, and M. Oeming, eds.
2011: *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Lipschits, O., and M. Oeming, eds.
2006: *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Lipschits, O., O. Sergi, and I. Koch
2010: "Royal Judahite Jar Handles: Reconsidering the Chronology of the *lmlk* Stamp Impressions." *Tel Aviv* 57: 3–32.
Lipschits, O., and D. S. Vanderhooft
2007: "Yehud Stamp Impressions in the Fourth Century B.C.E.: A Time of Administrative Consolidation?" Pages 75–94 in Lipschits, Knoppers, and Albertz, eds.
2011: *The Judah Stamp Impressions: A Corpus of Inscribed Impressions from the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
2020: "Yehud Stamp Impressions from Ramat-Rahel: An Updated Tabulation." *BASOR* 384: 191–209.
Littman, Robert J.
1995: "Athens, Persia and the Book of Ezra." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 125: 251–59.
Livingston, Gretchen, and Anna Brown
2017: "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia." Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/.
Long, B. O.
1987: "Framing Repetitions in Biblical Historiography." *JBL* 106: 385–99.
Lozachmeur, H.
1998: "Epigraphe sur jarre d'Elephantine (collection Charles Clermont-Ganneau, no 248)." *Transeuphratène* 2: 183–86.
Luckenbill, David Daniel
1924: *The Annals of Sennacherib.* Oriental Institute Publications 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Luria, B.-Z.
1983: *The Time of the Return to Zion* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher.
Lust, J.
1987: "The Identification of Zerubbabel with Sheshbassar." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 63: 90–95.
Maccoby, Hyam
1996: "Holiness and Purity: The Holy People in Leviticus and Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 153–71 in J. F. A. Sawyer, ed. *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas.* JSOTSup 227. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Magdalene, Rachel F.
1994: "A Typology of the Legal Material in Ezra-Nehemiah." Unpublished paper.
2009: "Judicial and Legal Systems," section i: "Achaemenid Judicial and Legal Systems." Pages 174–77 in Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopedia Iranica,* Vol. 15. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Magdalene, Rachel F., and Cornelia Wunsch
2012: "Slavery Between Judah and Babylon: The Exilic Experience." Pages 113–38 in L. Culberston, ed. *Slaves and Households in the Near East.* Oriental Institute Seminars 7. Chicago: Oriental Institute.
Magen, Y.
2000: "Mt. Gerizim: A Temple City." *Qadmoniot* 33: 74–118.
Maier, Christle M.
1998: "Conflicting Attractions: Parental Wisdom and the 'Strange Woman' in Proverbs 1–9." Pages 92–108 in A. Brenner and C. Fontaine, eds. *Wisdom and Psalms: A Feminist Companion to the Bible.* Second Series. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
2017: "The 'Foreign' Women in Ezra-Nehemiah: Intersectional Perspectives on Ethnicity." Pages 79–94 in L. J. Classens and C. J. Sharp, eds. *Feminist Frameworks and the Bible: Power, Ambiguity, and Intersectionality.* London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.
Mallau, Hans H.
1988: "The Redaction of Ezra 4–6: A Plea for a Theology of Scribes." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 15: 67–80.
Marbury, Herbert R.
2010: "Ezra and Nehemiah." Pages 280–85 in Hugh R. Page, ed. *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
2012: *Imperial Dominion and Priestly Genius: Coercion, Accommodation, and Resistance in the Divorce Rhetoric of Ezra-Nehemiah.* Upland, CA: Sopher.
2020: "Exogamy and Divorce in Ezra and Nehemiah." Pages 228–40 in Brad E. Kelle and Brent A. Strawn, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Historical Books of the Hebrew Bible.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Margalit, O.
1986: "The Political Role of Ezra as Persian Governor." *ZAW* 98: 110–12.
1991: "The Political Background of Zerubbabel's Mission and the Samaritan Schism." *VT* 41: 312–23.
Mason, R.
1997: *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament.* London: SPCK.
Mason, S. N.
2007: "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38: 457–512.
Mathews, H. J.
1882: *Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah by Rabbi Saadia, edited from Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library.* Oxford: Clarendon.
Matzal, Stefan
2000: "The Structure of Ezra IV–VI." *VT* 50: 566–69.
McBride, S. Dean
1987: "Polity of the Covenant People." *Interpretation* 41: 229–44.
McConville, J. G.
1986: "Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy." *VT* 36: 205–24.

McFall, Leslie
1991: "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458 BC?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 53: 263–93.
Meier, S.
1991: "Women and Communication in the Ancient Near East." *JAOS* 111: 540–47.
Meiggs, R., and D. Lewis
1980: *A Selection of Greek Inscriptions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mendels, Doron
1983: "Hecataeus of Abdera and a Jewish 'patrio politeia' of the Persian Period (Diodorus Siculus XL, 3)." *ZAW* 95: 96–110.
Meyer, Eduard
1896: *Die Entstehung des Judentum*s. 1965 ed. Hildesheim: Olms.
Meyers, Carol
1988: *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
1991: "Of Drums and Damsels: Women's Performance in Ancient Israel." *Biblical Archaeologist* 54: 16–27.
2005: *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women.* Minneapolis: Fortress.
2010: "Household Religion." Pages 118–34 in Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, eds. *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah.* London: T & T Clark.
2011: *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2018: "Women in Ancient Israel." Pages 396–402 in Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton, eds. *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press.
Meyers, Carol, and Eric M. Meyers
1987: *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8.* AB 25B. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
Meyers, Eric M.
1985: "The Shelomith Seal and Aspects of the Judean Restoration: Some Additional Reconsiderations." *Eretz Israel* 17: 33–38.
1987: "The Persian Period and the Judean Restoration: From Zerubbabel to Nehemiah." Pages 509–21 in P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride, eds. *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross.* Philadelphia: Fortress.
Mieroop, Marc C. van de
1999: *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History*. Approaching the Ancient World. London: Routledge.
2004: "A Tale of Two Cities: Nineveh and Babylon." *Iraq* 66: 1–5.
Mildenberg, L.
1994: "On the Money Circulation in Palestine from Artaxerxes II till Ptolemy I. Preliminary Studies of the Local Coinage in the Fifth Persian Satrapy. Part 5 (Pls. I–II)." *Transeuphratène* 7: 63–71.

1997: "On the Imagery of the Philisto-Arabian Coinage: A Preview (Pls. I–III)." *Transeuphratène* 13: 9–16.

Milevski, Ianir

1996: "Settlement Patterns in Northern Judah During the Achaemenid Period, According to the Hill Country of Benjamin and Jerusalem Surveys." *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 15: 7–28.

Milgrom, Jacob.

1976a: "The Concept of *ma'al* in the Bible and the Ancient Near East." *JAOS* 96: 236–47.

1976b: *Cult and Conscience: The* Asham *and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance.* Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 18. Leiden: Brill.

1991: *Leviticus 1–16.* AB 3. New York: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).

2000: *Leviticus 17–22.* AB 3. New York: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).

2004: *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics. A Continental Commentary.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Millard, A. R.

1987: "The Question of Israelite Literacy: The Scribes Had No Monopoly on Writing." *Bible Review* 3: 22–31.

Min, Kyun-Jin

2004: *The Levitical Authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah.* LHBOTS. London: T & T Clark.

Mitchell, Peter

2019: *The Donkey in Human History: An Archaeological Perspective.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mittleman, Alan L.

1996: *The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Momigliano, Arnaldo

1981: "History and Biography." Pages 155–84 in M. I. Finley, ed. *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal.* Oxford: Clarendon.

1990: *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Morgenstern, Julian

1956: "Jerusalem—485 B.C." *HUCA* 27: 101–79.

Mowinckel, S.

1961: "'Ich' und 'Er' in der Esrageschichte." Pages 211–33 in A. Kuschke, ed. *Verbannung und Heimkher: Beitrage zur Geschichte und Theologie Israels im 6 und 5 Jahrhundert v. Chr. Wilhelm Rudolph zum 70 Geburtstag dargebracht von Kollegen, Freunden, und Schülern.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

1964a: *Studien zu dem Buche Esra-Nehemia I: Die nachchronisten Redaktion des Buche. Die Listen.* SUNVAO. Oslo: Universitsforlaget.

1964b: *Studien zu dem Buche Esra-Nehemia II: Die Nehemia-Denkschrift.* SUNVAO. Oslo: Universitsforlaget.

1965: *Studien zu dem Buche Esra-Nehemia III: Die Esrageschichte und das Gestz Moses.* SUNVAO. Oslo: Universitsforlaget.

Mueller, J. R., and G. A. Robbins
1983: "Vision of Ezra." Pages 581–90 in J. H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
Muffs, J. Y.
1968: *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine.* Studia et Documents ad Iura Orientis Antiqui Pertinentia VIII. Leiden: Brill.
Müller, Hans-Peter
1971: "Phönizien und Juda in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit." *Die Welt des Orients* 6: 189–204.
Myers, J. M.
1965a: *Ezra-Nehemiah.* AB 14. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
1965b: *I Chronicles.* AB 12. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
1965c: *II Chronicles.* AB 13. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
1974: *I and II Esdras.* AB 42. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (reprint: New Haven: Yale University Press).
Na'aman, Nadav
2000: "Royal Vassals or Governors? On the Status of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in the Persian Empire." *Henoch* 22: 35–44.
Najman, Hindy
1999: "Torah of Moses: Pseudonymous Attribution in Second Temple Writings." Pages 202–16 in Craig A. Evans, ed. *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition.* Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 33; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
Naveh, Joseph
1998: "Scripts and Inscriptions in Ancient Samaria." *IEJ* 48: 91–100.
Naveh, Joseph, and Shaul Shaked
2012: *Aramaic Documents from Ancient Bactria (Fourth Century BCE)*. Studies in the Khalili Collection. London: Khalili Collection.
Newman, Judith H.
1999: *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism.* Early Judaism and Its Literature 14. Atlanta: SBL Press.
Niehr, Herbert
1999: "Religio-Historical Aspects of the 'Early Post-Exilic' Period." Pages 228–44 in Becking and Korpel, eds.
Nihan, Christophe Laurent
2010: "The Emergence of the Pentateuch as Torah." *Religion Compass* 10: 353–64.
Nikel, J.
1900: *Die Widerherstellung des jüdischen Gemeinwesens nach dem babylonischen Exil.* Biblische Studientum Bd. 5 Heft 2–3. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Nims, Charles E., and Richard C. Steiner
1981: "A Paganized Version of Ps 20:2–6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script." *JAOS* 103: 261–74.
North, R.
1990: "The Chronicler: 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah." Pages 362–98 in Raymond E. Brown, ed. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Noth, Martin
1957: *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien.* 2nd ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. [English of part 2: *The Chronicler's History.* Translated by H. G. M. Williamson. JSOTSup 50. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.]
1958: *The History of Israel.* Translated by Stanley Godman. New York: Harper.
1960: *The History of Israel.* 2nd ed. Translated by Stanley Godman. Revised by P. R. Ackroyd. New York: Harper.
1967: *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die Sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerks im Alten Testament.* 3rd ed. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer. Originally published in 1943.
Nurmela, Risto
1998: *The Levites: Their Emergence as a Second-Class Priesthood.* South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 193. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
Nutkowicz, Helene
2007: "Concerning the Verb ŚN' in Judaeo-Aramaic Contracts from Elephantine." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52: 211–25.
Oded, B.
2003: "Where Is the Myth of the Empty Land to Be Found?" Pages 55–74 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.
Olmstead, A. T.
1944: "Tattenai, Governor of 'Across the River.'" *JNES* 3: 46.
1948: *History of the Persian Empire.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Olyan, Saul M.
2004: "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 35: 1–16.
Osborne, Robin
1997: "Law, the Democratic Citizen, and the Representation of Women in Classical Athens." *Past and Present* 155: 1–33.
Oswald, Wolfgang
2012: "Foreign Marriages and Citizenship in Persian Period Judah." *JHS* 12: Article 6.
Pakkala, Juha
2004: *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8.* BZAW 347. Berlin: de Gruyter.
2011: "Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Ezra Tradition (Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8)." Pages 78–87 in Frevel, ed.
Parente, Fausto
1979: "Ezra 6.11. La pena comminata a chi altera l'editto di Dario." *Henoch* 1: 189–200.

Pasto, James
1998: "When the End Is the Beginning? Or When the Biblical Past Is the Political Present: Some Thoughts on Ancient Israel, 'Post-Exilic Judaism,' and the Politics of Biblical Scholarship." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 12: 157–202.
Patterson, Cynthia
1981: *Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451–50 B.C.* New York: Arno Press.
Paulissiann, Robert
1999: "Adoption in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia." *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 13.2: 5–34.
Pearce, Laurie E.
2006: "New Evidence for Judeans in Babylonia." Pages 399–411 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
Pearce, Laurie E., and Cornelia Wunsch
2014: *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer.* Bethesda, MD: CDL Press.
Perdue, L. G., J. Blenkinsopp, J. J. Collins, and C. Meyers, eds.
1997: *Families in Ancient Israel.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
Petersen, David L.
1974: "Zerubbabel and Jerusalem Temple Construction." *CBQ* 36: 366–72.
1984: *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8.* OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster.
1995: *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi.* OTL. Louisville: Westminster.
Petit, T.
1988: "L'évolution sémantique des termes hébreux et araméens *pḥh* et *sgn* et accadiens *pāḫatu* et *šaknu.*" *JBL* 107: 53–67.
Pfeiffer, Robert Henry
1952: *Introduction to the Old Testament.* 2nd ed. New York: Harper.
Pohlmann, Karl Friedrich
1970: *Studien zum dritten Esra: Ein Beitrage zur Frage nach dem ursprünglichen Schluss des chronistischen Geschichtswerkes. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 104. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
1989: "Zur Frage von Korrespondenzen und Divergenzen zwischen den Chronikbücher und dem Esra/Nehemia-Buch." Pages 314–40 in J. A. Emerton, ed. *Congress Volume Leuven 1989.* VTSup 43. Leiden: Brill.
Polak, Frank H.
2006: "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire." Pages 589–645 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
Polaski, Don
2012: "Nehemiah: Subject of the Empire, Subject of Writing." Pages 37–59 in Kalimi, ed.
Porten, Bezalel
1963: "The Restoration of Zion in Light of the Elephantine Papyri." *Beth Mikra* 16: 66–79.
1968: *Archives from Elephantine.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
1979: "The Documents in the Book of Ezra and the Mission of Ezra" [in Hebrew]. *Shenaton* 3: 174–96.

1981: "Structure and Chiasm in Aramaic Contracts and Letters." Pages 169–82 in J. W. Welch, ed. *Chiasmus in Antiquity.* Hildesheim: Gerstenberg.
2003: "Elephantine and the Bible." Pages 51–84 in L. H. Schiffman, ed. *Semitic Papyrology in Context: A Climate of Creativity. Papers from a New York University Conference Marking the Retirement of Baruch A. Levine.* Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 14. Leiden: Brill.

Porten, B., and H. Z. Szubin
1987: "Litigants in the Elephantine Contracts: The Development of Legal Terminology." *Maarav* 4: 45–67.

Porten, Bezalel, and Ada Yardeni
2018: *Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea,* Vol. 3. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

Porten, Gary G.
2001: "Ezra in Rabbinic Literature." Pages 305–33 in James M. Scott, ed. *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives.* Leiden: Brill.

Porter, J. R.
1967: "Son or Grandson (Ezra X.6)?" *JTS* 17: 54–67.

Powell, Marvin A.
1992: "Weights and Measures." *ABD* 6: 897–908.

Pritchard, James B.
1958: *The Ancient Near East.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2011: *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Prosic, Tamara
1999: "Passover in Biblical Narrative." *JSOT* 82: 45–55.

Pummer, Reinhard
2007. "The Samaritans and Their Pentateuchs." Pages 237–69 in Knoppers and Levinson, eds.

Rabinowitz, J. J.
1957: "A Legal Formula in Egyptian, Egyptian-Aramaic, and Murabba at Documents." *BASOR* 145: 33–34.
1959: "'The Great Sin' in Ancient Egyptian Marriage Contracts." *JNES* 18: 73.

Rabinowitz, Y.
1984: *Ezra.* ArtScroll Tanach Series. New York: Mesorah Publications.

Rainey, A. F.
1969: "The Satrapy 'Beyond the River.'" *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 1–2: 51–78.

Redditt, Paul L.
1992: "Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the Night Visions of Zechariah." *CBQ* 54: 249–59.
2012: "The Census List in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7: A Suggestion." Pages 223–40 in Kalimi, ed.

Redford, Donald B.
2001: "The So-Called 'Codification' of Egyptian Law Under Darius I." Pages 135–59 in James W. Watts, ed. *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Rendtorff, Rolf
1977: *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch.* BZAW 147. Berlin: de Gruyter. [English: *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch.* Translated by John J. Scullion. JSOTSup 89. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990.]
1984: "Esra und das 'Gesetz.'" *ZAW* 96: 165–84.
1997: "Directions in Pentateuchal Studies." *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 5: 43–65.
Reviv, H.
1983: *The Elders in Ancient Israel. A Study of a Biblical Institution* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Magnes.
Rich, Adrienne
1981: *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far.* New York: Norton.
Richards, Kent Harold
1994: "Building Temples Out of Words, Building Temples Out of Stones: Venturing Beyond Historical and Literary Reconstructions of Second Temple Israelite Religion." Pages 23–34 in Jacob Neusner, ed. *Religion and the Social Order: What Kinds of Lessons Does History Teach?* Atlanta: Scholars Press.
Rimmon-Kenan, S.
1983: *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics.* London: Methuen.
Ristau, Kenneth A.
2009: "Reading and Rereading Josiah: The Chronicler's Representation of Josiah for the Postexilic Community." Pages 219–47 in Knoppers and Ristau, eds.
2016: "The Achaemenid Persian Empire in the West and Persian-Period Yehud." Pages 236–43 in J. S. Greer, J. W. Hilber, and J. H. Walton, eds. *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
Römer, T.
1998: "Transformations et influences dans 'l'historiographie' juive de la fin du VIIe s. av. notre ère jusqu'à l'èpoque perse." *Transeuphratène* 13: 41–63.
Rom-Shiloni, Dalit
2013: *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th–5th Centuries BCE)*. LHBOTS 543. London: Bloomsbury.
2018: "Exclusive Inclusivity: The Transparent and the Invisible: A Response." *JHS* 18: Article 1, 63–77.
Rooke, Deborah W.
2000: *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Root, Margaret Cool
2010: "Palace to Temple—King to Cosmos: Achaemenid Foundation Texts in Iran." Pages 165–210 in Boda and Novotny, eds.
Rosenberg, A. J.
1991: *Daniel. Ezra. Nehemiah: A New English Translation of Text, Rashi and Commentary.* New York: Judaica Press.

Rosenfeld, Michael J.
2008: "Racial, Educational, and Religious Endogamy in the United States." *Social Forces* 87: 1–32.
Roth, Martha T.
1989: *Babylonian Marriage Agreements 7th–3rd Centuries B.C.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
Rothenbusch, Ralf
2011: "The Question of Mixed Marriages Between the Poles of Diaspora and Homeland: Observations in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 60–78 in Frevel, ed.
Rowley, H. H.
1954–1955: "Nehemiah's Mission and Its Background." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37: 528–62.
1955–1956: "Sanballat and the Samaritan Temple." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 38: 166–98.
1965: "The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah." Pages 137–68 in H. H. Rowley. *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Roy, J.
1999: "'Polis' and 'Oikos' in Classical Athens." *Greece & Rome* 46: 1–18.
Rubenstein, J.
1995: *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods.* Brown Judaic Studies. Atlanta: SBL Press.
Rudolph, W.
1949: *Esra und Nehemia.* Handbuch zum Alten Testament 20. Tübingen: Mohr.
Rundgren, F.
1957: "Zur Bedeutung von SRSW—Esra VII 26." *VT* 7: 400–404.
1958: "Über einen juristischen Terminus bei Esra 6:6." *ZAW* 70: 209–15.
Russell, James R.
1990: "Sages and Scribes at the Courts of Ancient Iran." Pages 141–46 in J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue, eds. *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East.* Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Saebø, M.
1989: "The Relation of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel—Reconsidered." *Svensk Exegetisk Aarsbok* 54: 168–77.
Saley, Richard
1978: "The Date of Nehemiah Reconsidered." Pages 151–65 in G. A. Tuttle, ed. *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of Williams Sanford LaSor.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H.
1983: "Exit Atossa: Images of Women in Greek Historiography on Persia." Pages 2–33 in A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt, eds. *Images of Women in Antiquity.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
1999: "Persian Kings and History." Pages 91–112 in C. S. Kraus, ed. *Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts.* Boston: Brill.

Sancisi-Weerdenburg, H., ed.
1987: *Achaemenid History. Proceedings of the Groningen 1983 Achaemenid History Workshop.* 3 vols. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
Satlow, Michael L.
2014: "Passover and the Festival of Matzot: Synthesizing the Two Holidays." TheTorah.com, https://www.thetorah.com/article/passover-and-the-festival-of-matzot-synthesizing-two-holidays.
Saysell, Csilla
2012: *"According to the Law": Reading Ezra 9–10 as Christian Scripture.* Journal for Theological Interpretation, Supplements. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Schaeder, H. H.
1930: *Iranische Beiträge.* Halle: Max Niemeyer. 1966 ed.
1934: *Esra der Schreiber.* Tübingen: Mohr Nendeln.
Schaper, Joachim
1997: "The Temple Treasury Committee in the Times of Nehemiah and Ezra." *VT* 47: 200–206.
1999: "Hebrew and Its Study in the Persian Period." Pages 15–26 in W. Horbury, ed. *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda.* Edinburgh: T & T Clark.
2000: *Priester und Leviten im achämenidischen Juda. Studien zur Kultund Sozialgeschichte Israels in persischer Zeit.* FAT 31. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Schenker, Adrian
1991: "La Relation d'Esdras A' au texte massoretique d'Esdras-Nehémie." Pages 218–48 in Gerard J. Norton and Stephen Pisano, eds. *Tradition of the Text: Studies Offered to Dominique Barthelemy in Celebration of His 70th Birthday.* Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 109. Freiburg: Universitatsverlag; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Schneider, Heinrich
1959: *Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia.* 2nd ed. Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes IV 2. Bonn: Peter Hanstein.
Schniedewind, William M.
2000: "Orality and Literacy in Ancient Israel." *Religious Studies Review* 26: 327–32.
2004: *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2019: *The Finger of the Scribe: The Beginnings of Scribal Education and How It Shaped the Hebrew Bible.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Schottroff, W.
1982: "Zur Sozialgeschichte Israels in der Perserzeit." *Verkündigung und Forschung Altes Testament* 27: 46–68.
Schultz, C.
1980: "The Political Tensions Reflected in Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 221–44 in C. D. Evans, W. W. Hallo, and J. B. White, eds. *Scripture in Context: Essays on Comparative Method.* Pittsburgh: Pickwick.
Schwartz, Baruch J.
2011: "Does Recent Scholarship's Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis Constitute Grounds for Rejection?" Pages 3–16 in Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad

Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, eds. *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research.* FAT 78. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Schwiderski, Dirk

2000: *Handbuch des nordwestsemitichen Briefformulars: Ein Beitrag zur Echtheitsfrage der aramäischen Briefe des Esrabuches.* BZAW 295. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Sealey, Raphael

1987: *The Athenian Republic: Democracy or the Rule of Law?* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Segal, J. B.

1987: "Five Ostraca Re-examined." *Maarav* 4: 69–74.

Segal, Michael

2002: "Numerical Discrepancies in the List of Vessels in Ezra I 9–11." *VT* 52: 122–29.

Seibert, I.

1974: *Woman in Ancient Near East.* Edition Leipzig. London: George Prior.

Sievers, Joseph.

2001: "Josephus, First Maccabees, Sparta, the Three Haireseis—and Cicero." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 32: 241–51.

Silverman, Jason M.

2015: "Sheshbazzar, a Judean or a Babylonian? A Note on His Identity." Pages 308–32 in Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers, eds. *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context.* Berlin: de Gruyter.

Silverman, J. M., and C. Waerzeggers, eds.

2015: *Political Memory in and After the Persian Empire.* Ancient Near East Monographs 13. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Slotki, Judah J.

1951: *Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Soncino Books of the Bible. London: Soncino.

Small, David B., ed.

1995: *Methods in the Mediterranean: Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology.* Leiden: Brill.

1997: "An Archaeology of Democracy?" Pages 217–28 in I. Morris and K. A. Raflaub, eds. *Democracy 2500?: Questions and Challenges.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Smith, Morton

1971: *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament.* New York: CSM Press.

Smith (Smith-Christopher), Daniel L.

1989: *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile.* Bloomington, IN: Meyer Stone.

1991: "The Politics of Ezra: Sociological Indications of Postexilic Judean Society." Pages 73–97 in P. R. Davies, ed.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L.

1994: "The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of Post-Exilic Judean Community." Pages 243–65 in Eskenazi and Richards, eds.

1995: "Rev. of *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* by Mervin Breneman." *CBQ* 57: 118–20.

1996: "Resistance in a Culture of Permission: A Sociological Reading of the Correspondence with Persian Authorities in Ezra 1–7." Pages 15–35 in P. N. Anderson and H. R. Macy, eds. *Truth's Bright Embrace: Essays and Poems in Honor of Arthur O. Roberts.* Newberg, OR: George Fox University Press.

2002: "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology." Pages 117–42 Brett, ed.

Snyman, Gerrie

2007: "Collective Memory and Coloniality of Being as a Hermeneutical Framework: A Partialised Reading of Ezra-Nehemiah." *Old Testament Essays* 20: 53–83.

Southwood, Katherine

2011a: "The Holy Seed: The Significance of Endogamous Boundaries and Their Transgressions in Ezra 9–10." Pages 189–224 in Lipschits and Knoppers, eds.

2011b: "Ethnic Affair? Ezra's Intermarriage Crisis Against a Context of 'Self-Ascription' and 'Ascription of Others." Pages 46–59 in Frevel, ed.

2012: *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10: An Anthropological Approach.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sowers, Sidney G.

1996: "Did Xerxes Wage War on Jerusalem?" *HUCA* 67: 43–53.

Spilsbury, Paul, and Chris Seeman

2016: *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary,* Vol. 6a: *Judean Antiquities 11.* Leiden: Brill.

Spinoza, Benedict de

1677: *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus. Theologicao-Political Treatise: A Political Treatise.* Translated by R. H. M. Elwes. New York: Dover. 1951 ed.

Stackert, Jeffrey

2011: "The Cultic Status of the Levites in the Temple Scroll: Between History and Hermeneutics." Pages 199–214 in Leuchter and Hutton, eds.

2022: *Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch.* Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Stahl, Michael J.

2020: "The God of Israel' in Judah's Bible: Problems and Prospects." *JBL* 139: 721–45.

2021: *The "God of Israel" in History and Tradition.* VTSup 187. Leiden: Brill.

Stavrakopoulou, Francesca, and John Barton, eds.

2010: *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah.* New York: T & T Clark.

Steiner, Richard C.

1995: "Papyrus Amherst 63: A New Source for the Language, Literature, Religion, and History of the Aramaeans." Pages 199–207 in M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, eds. Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 4. *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2001: "The *mbqr* at Qumran, the *episkopos* in the Athenian Empire, and the Meaning of *lbqr*' in Ezra 7:14: On the Relation of Ezra's Mission to the Persian Legal Project." *JBL* 120: 623–46.

2006: "Bishlam's Archival Search Report in Nehemiah's Archive: Multiple Introductions and Reverse Chronological Order as Clues to the Origin of the Aramaic Letters in Ezra 4–6." *JBL* 126: 641–85.
2007: "Why Bilsham (Ezr 4:7) Cannot Rest 'In Peace': On the Aramaic and Hebrew Sound Changes That Conspired to Blot out the Remembrance of Bel-Shalam the Archivist." *JBL* 126: 392–401.

Steinmann, Andrew E.
2008: "Letters of Kings About Votive Offerings, the God of Israel, and the Aramaic Documents of Ezra 4:8–6:18." *JHS* 8: Article 23.

Stern, Ephraim
1982: *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538–532 B.C.* Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
1990: "The Dor Province in the Persian Period in the Light of the Recent Excavations at Tel Dor." *Transeuphratène* 2: 147–55.
1994: "Assyrian and Babylonian Elements in the Material Culture of Palestine in the Persian Period." *Transeuphratène* 7: 51–62.
1999: "Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian Periods." Pages 245–55 in Becking and Korpel, eds.
2001: *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Vol. II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods 732–332 BCE.* New York: Doubleday.

Stern, Ephraim, and Y. Magen
2002: "Archeological Evidence of the First Stage of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim." *IEJ* 52: 49–57.

Stern, Ian
2007: "The Population of Persian Period Idumea According to the Ostraca: A Study of Ethnic Boundaries and Ethnogenesis." Pages 205–38 in Levin, ed.

Sternberg, Meir
1985: *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Stolper, Matthew W.
1984: "The Neo-Babylonian Text from the Persepolis Fortification." *JNES* 43: 299–310.
1985: *Entrepreneurs and Empire: The Murašû Archive, the Murašû Firm, and Persian Rule in Babylonia.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
1989a: "Registration and Taxation of Slaves in Achaemenid Babylonia." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 79: 80–101.
1989b: "The Governor of Babylon and Across-the-River in 486 B.C." *JNES* 48: 283–305.
1999: "Achaemenid Legal Texts from the Kasr: Interim Observations." Pages 335–76 in Johannes Renger, ed. *Babylon: Focus Mesopotamsicher Geschichte, Wiege Früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne: Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft Band 2.*Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker, Druckerei und Verlag.

Stolper, M. W., and B. André-Salvini
1992: "The Written Record." Pages 253–78 in Prudence O. Harper, Joan Aruz, and Françoise Tallon, eds. *The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Stone, M., ed.
1984: *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus.* Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, Section Two. Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress.
Suiter, David E.
1992: "The Contribution of Chronological Studies to Understanding Ezra-Nehemiah," PhD diss., University of Denver.
Tadmor, H.
1964: "The Historical Background of the Decree of Cyrus." Pages 450–73 in Oz le-David, ed. *Sepher Ben Gurion* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher.
1968: "The Babylonian Exile, the Return to Zion, and the Period of the Reign of the Persian Kings." Pages 154–73 in H. H. Ben Sasson, ed. *The History of the People Israel* [in Hebrew]. Tel Aviv: Dvir.
Tal, Oren
2005: "Some Remarks on the Coastal Plan of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule: An Archaeological Synopsis." Pages 71–96 in Pierre Briant and Rémy Boucharlat, eds. *L'archéologie de l'empire achéménide: nouvelles recherches.* Persika 6. Paris: Boccard.
Talmon, Shemaryahu
1953: "The Sectarian YHD: A Biblical Noun." *VT* 3: 133–40.
1991: "Esra-Nehemia: Historiographie oder Theologie?" Pages 329–56 in Dwight R. Daniels, Uwe Glessmer, and Martin Rösel, eds. *Ernten, was man sät: Festschrift für Klaus Koch zu seinem 65. Geburtstag.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
2001: "'Exile' and 'Restoration' in the Conceptual World of Ancient Judaism." Pages 107–46 in James M. Scott, ed. *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives.* Leiden: Brill.
Talshir, David
1988a: "The References to Ezra and the Books of Chronicles in Baba Bathra 15a." *VT* 28: 358–59.
1988b: "A Reinvestigation of the Linguistic Relationship Between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah." *VT* 28: 165–93.
Talshir, David, and Zipora Talshir
2004: "The Double Month Naming in Late Biblical Books: A New Clue for Dating Esther." *VT* 54: 549–55.
Talshir, Zipora
1999: *1 Esdras: From Origin to Tradition.* Atlanta: SBL Press.
2001: "Several Canon-Related Concepts Originating in Chronicles." *ZAW* 113: 386–403.
Tappy, Ron
1997: "Samaria." Pages 463–67 in Eric M. Meyers, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East,* Vol. 4. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tcherikover, V.
1959: *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
Thiessen, M.
2009: "The Function of a Conjunction: Inclusivist or Exclusivist Strategies in Ezra 6.19–21 and Nehemiah 10:29–30?" *JSOT* 34: 63–79.
Thompson, Thomas L.
2001: "Holy War at the Center of Biblical Theology: Shalom and the Cleansing of Jerusalem." Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, Denver, November 17–20.
Thonemann, Peter
2020: "But What If . . . A Counterfactual Examination of the History of Europe." *Times Literary Supplement.* January 31: 4–5.
Throntveit, M. A.
1982: "Linguistic Analysis and the Question of Authorship in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah." *VT* 32: 201–16.
1987: *When Kings Speak: Royal Speech and Royal Prayer in Chronicles.* SBLDS 93. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
Tiemeyer, Lina-Sofia
2011: *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40–66.* VTSup 139. Leiden: Brill.
2018: "Review of Dalit Rom-Shiloni: *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflict Between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th to 5th Centuries BCE)* (LHBOTS 543. London: Bloomsbury 2013)." *JHS* 18: 43–47.
Tigay, J. H.
1978: "*Lifnê haššabāṯ* and *ʾah.ar haššabbāṯ* = 'On the Day Before the Sabbath' and 'On the Day After the Sabbath' (Nehemiah xiii 19)." *VT* 28: 362–64.
1996: *JPS Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
2013: "The Torah Scroll and God's Presence." Pages 323–40 in M. L. Grossman, ed. *Built in Wisdom, Established by Understanding: Essays on Biblical and Near Eastern Literature in Honor of Adele Berlin.* Bethesda: University Press of Maryland.
Timm, S.
1995: "Die Bedeutung der spätbabylonischen Texte aus *Nērab* für die Rückkehr der Judäer aus dem Exil." Pages 276–88 in M. Weippert and S. Timm, eds. *Meilenstein: Festgabe für Herbert Donner zum 16 Februar 1995.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
Toorn, Karel van der
1997: "The Iconic Book Analogies Between the Babylonian Cult Images and the Veneration of the Torah." Pages 229–48 in Karel van der Toorn, ed. *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of the Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East.* Leuven: Peeters.
2007: *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2017: "Celebrating the New Year with the Israelites: Three Extra-Biblical Psalms from Papyrus Amherst 63." *JBL* 136: 633–49.

2018: *Papyrus Amherst 63.* AOAT 448. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
Torrey, C. C.
1896: *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah.* BZAW 2. Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung.
1897: "Old Testament Notes." *JBL* 16: 166–70.
1910: *Ezra Studies.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1970 ed. New York: Ktav).
1954: "More Elephantine Papyri." *JNES* 13: 149–53.
Tuplin, C.
1987: "The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire." Pages 109–66 in J. Carradice, ed. *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires.* Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.
1999: "Greek Racism? Observations on the Character and Limits of Greek Ethnic Prejudice." Pages 47–75 in G. R. Tsetskhladze, ed. *Ancient Greeks West and East.* Leiden: Brill.
Uitti, Roger W.
1992: "Immer." *ABD* 3: 395–96.
Ulrich, Eugene
1992: "Ezra and Qoheleth Manuscripts from Qumran (4QEzra and 4QQohA, B)." Pages 139–57 in E. Urlich, J. W. Wright, R. P. Carroll, and P. R. Davies, eds. *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp.* Sheffield: JSOT Press.
Ungnad, A.
1940: "Keilingschriftliche Beiträge zum Buch Esra und Ester." *ZAW* 58: 240–44.
Uspensky, B.
1973: *A Poetics of Composition.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Ussishkin, David
2006: "The Borders and *De Facto* Size of Jerusalem in the Persian Period." Pages 147–66 in Lipschits and Oeming, eds.
Vanderhooft, David
2003: "New Evidence Pertaining to the Transition from Neo-Babylonian to Achaemenid Administration in Palestine." Pages 219–35 in R. Albertz and B. Becking, eds. *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period.* Studies in Theology and Religion 5. Assen-Maastricht: Van Gorcum.
Vanderhooft, D. S., M. Richey, and O. Lipschits
2019: "A New Type of Yehud Stamp Impression: *yhwd/gdlya.*" *IEJ* 69: 54–59.
VanderKam, James C.
1991: "Jewish High Priests of the Persian Period: Is the List Complete?" Pages 67–91 in S. M. Olyan and G. A. Anderson, eds. *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
1992a: "Calendar, Israelite and Early Jewish." *ABD* 1: 814–20.
1992b: "Ezra-Nehemiah or Ezra and Nehemiah?" Pages 55–75 in E. Urlich, J. W. Wright, R. P. Carroll, and P. R. Davies, eds. *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays*

on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

2004: *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests After the Exile.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

van Driel, G.

1987: "Continuity or Decay in the Late Achaemenid Period: Evidence from Southern Mesopotamia." Pages 159–81 in H. Sancisi-Weedenburg, ed. *The Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Synthesis.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabije Oosten.

Veeser, H. Aram, ed.

1989: *The New Historicism.* New York: Routledge.

Venema, G. J.

2004: *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 9–10; 31. 2 Kings 22–23. Jeremiah 36. Nehemiah 8.* Old Testament Studies 48. Leiden: Brill.

Vogt, H. C. M.

1966: *Studie zur nachexilischen Gemeinde in Esra-Nehemia.* Werl: Dietrich Coelde.

Waerzeggers, Caroline B.

2004: "The Babylonian Revolts Against Xerxes and the 'End of Archives.'" *Archiv für Orientforschung* 50: 150–73.

2010: *The Ezida Temple of Borsippa: Priesthood, Cult, Archives.* Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.

2011a: "The Babylonian Priesthood in the Long Sixth Century BC." Pages 59–70 in R. Rollinger, B. Truschnegg, and R. Bichler, eds. *Herodotus and the Persian Empire.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

2011b: "The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples." Pages 725–51 in K. Radner and E. Robson, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2014: "Locating Contact in the Babylonian Exile: Some Reflections on Tracing Judean-Babylonian Encounters in Cuneiform Texts." Pages 131–46 in Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda, eds. *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations Between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity.* Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 160. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Washington, Harold C.

1994: "The Strange Woman (nkryh/ʾšh zrh) in Proverbs 1–9 and Post-Exilic Judean Society." Pages 217–42 in Eskenazi and Richards, eds.

2003: "Israel's Holy Seed and the Foreign Women of Ezra-Nehemiah: A Kristevan Reading." *Biblical Interpretation* 11: 427–37.

Waterfield, Robin, and Carolyn Dewald

1998: *Herodotus, The Histories.* Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Watts, James W.

1995: "Public Readings and Pentateuchal Law." *VT* 45: 540–57.

2013: "Scripturalization and the Aaronide Dynasties." *JHS* 13: Article 6.

Watts, James W., ed.

2001: *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch.* SBL Symposium Series 17. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Weber, R., and R. Gryson, eds.
1994: *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem.* Translated by Mark DelCogliano. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
Weinberg, Joel P.
1973: "Das *beit 'abot* in 6.-4. JH. V.U.Z." *VT* 23: 400–414.
1972: "Demographische Notizen zur Geschichte der nachexilischen Gemeinde in Juda." *Klio: Beiträge zur Alter-Geschichte* 54: 45–59.
1975: "*Netînîm* und 'Söhne der Sklaven Salomos' im 6.–4. Jh. v. u. Z." *ZAW* 87: 355–71.
1976: "Die Agrarverhältnisse in der Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde der Achämenidenzeit." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22: 473–85.
1992a: "Die Mentalität der jerusalemischen Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde des 6.–4. Jh. v.u.Z." *Transeuphratène* 5: 133–41.
1992b: *The Citizen-Temple Community.* Translated by Daniel L. Smith-Christopher. JSOTSup 151. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
1992c: "The *Bêt Âbôt* of the Sixth to Fourth Centuries BCE." Pages 49–61 in Weinberg, ed.
1997: "Transmitter and Recipient in the Process of Acculturation: The Experience of the Judean Citizen-Temple-Community." *Transeuphratène* 13: 90–105.
Weinfeld, M.
1984: "Inheriting the Land: Merit and Obligation: The Conception of Promise in Sources from First Temple and the Second Temple Days" [in Hebrew]. *Israel's Society for History and Ethnography* 49: 115–37.
Wellhausen, Julius
1883: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels.* Berlin: Druck und Verlag von G. Reimer. [English: *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel.* Translated by J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.]
1895: "Die Rückkehr des Juden aus dem babylonischen Exil." *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen.* Phil.-hist. Klasse: 166–86.
West, James E.
2005: "Rev. of *Jerusalem's Rise to Sovereignty: Zion and Gerizim in Competition* by Ingrid Hjelm." *Review of Biblical Literature,* September 17.
Whitelam, Keith W.
1996: *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History.* London: Routledge.
Whittingham, Martin
2013: "Ezra as the Corrupter of the Torah? Re-Assessing Ibn Ḥazm's Role in the Long History of an Idea." *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1: 253–71.
van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W. H.
1998: *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
Willett, Elizabeth
2013: "Women and House Religion." The Bible and Interpretation. https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/HouseReligion.

Willi, Thomas
1999: "Leviten, Priester, und Kult in vorhellenistischer Zeit: Die chronistische Optik in ihrem geschichtlichen Kontext." Pages 75–97 in B. Ego, A. Lang, and P. Pilhofer, with K. Ehlers, eds. *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation der Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
2000: "Kakkatuv—Die Tora zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit." Pages 43–61 in Werner Stegmaier, ed. *Die philosophische Aktualität der jüdischen Tradition.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Williamson, H. G. M.
1977: *Israel in the Books of Chronicles.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1979: "The Origins of the Twenty-Four Priestly Courses: A Study of Chronicles xxiii–xxvii." Pages 251–68 in J. A. Emerton, ed. *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament.* VTSup 30. Leiden: Brill.
1983: "The Composition of Ezra i–vi." *JTS* 34: 1–30.
1985: *Ezra, Nehemiah.* Word Biblical Commentary 16. Waco, TX: Word Books.
1987a: "Did the Author of Chronicles Also Write the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah?" *Bible Review* 3: 56–59.
1987b: *Ezra and Nehemiah.* Old Testament Guides. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
1987c: "Post-Exilic Historiography." Pages 189–207 in R. E. Friedman and H. G. M. Williamson, eds. *The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures.* SBL Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
1988a: "Structure and Historiography in Nehemiah 9." Pages 117–31 in Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, ed. *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies.* Jerusalem: Magnes.
1988b: "The Tyndale Biblical Archaeology Lecture, 1987: The Governors of Judah under the Persians." *Tyndale Bulletin* 39: 59–82.
1988c: "History." Pages 25–38 in D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, eds. *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honor of Barnabas Lindars.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1989: "The Concept of Israel in Transition." Pages 141–62 in R. E. Clements, ed. *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1990: "*'eben gĕlāl* (Ezra 5:8, 6:4) Again." *BASOR* 280: 83–88.
1991a: "Ezra and Nehemiah in the Light of the Texts from Persepolis." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1: 41–61.
1991b: "The Temple in the Books of Chronicles." Pages 15–31 in W. Horbury, ed. *Templum Amicitae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 48. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
1999a: "The Belief System of the Book of Nehemiah." Pages 276–311 in Becking and Korpel, eds.
1999b: "Exile and After: Historical Study." Pages 236–65 in D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold, eds. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

2003: "Review of Joachim Schaper, *Priester und Leviten im achämenidischen Juda. Studien zur Kultund Sozialgeschichte Israels in persischer Zeit.*" *JTS* 54: 615–20.
2008: "The Aramaic Documents in Ezra Revisited." *JTS* 59: 41–62.
2010: "Prophetesses in the Hebrew Bible." Pages 65–80 in J. Day, ed. *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar.* New York: T & T Clark.
2014: "Archaeology and Nehemiah's Wall." Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, November 21–25..

Willi-Plein, Ina
1999: "Warum mußte der Zweite Tempel gebaut werden?" Pages 57–73 in B. Ego, A. Lang, and P. Pilhofer, with K. Ehlers, eds. *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation der Jerusalemer Tempets und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Wills, Lawrence M.
2008: *Not God's People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World.* Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield.

Wilson, Robert R.
1977: *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World.* Yale Near Eastern Researches. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wiseman, D. J.
1985: *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wright, Jacob L.
2004: "Rev. of *Developments in Genre Between Post-Exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament* by Richard J. Bautch." *Review of Biblical Literature,* July 7.
2005: *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and Its Earliest Readers.* BZAW 348. Berlin: de Gruyter.
2007: "Writing the Restoration: Compositional Agenda and the Role of Ezra in Nehemiah 8." *JHS* 7: Article 10, 19–29.
2008: "Seeking—Finding—Writing." Pages 277–304 in Boda and Redditt, eds.
2010: "Ezra." Pages 263–70 in Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David L. Peterson, eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary.* Nashville: Abingdon.
2020: *War, Memory, and National Identity in the Hebrew Bible.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wulf, C. U.
1947: "Traces of Primitive Democracy in Ancient Israel." *JNES* 6: 98–108.

Würthwein, E.
1936: *Der 'amm ha'arez im Alten Testament.* BWANT 17. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Yardeni, Ada
1994: "Maritime Trade and Royal Accountancy in an Erased Customs Account from 475 B.C.E. on the Ahiqar Scroll from Elephantine." *BASOR* 293: 67–78.

Yaron, Y.
1961: *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Yoo, Philip Y.
2017: *Ezra and the Second Exodus.* Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2019: "Mind the Gap: From Torah to Torah in Ezra-Nehemiah." Paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting, San Diego, November 23–26.
Younger, K. Lawson, Jr.
1998: "The Deportations of the Israelites." *JBL* 117: 201–27.
Zadok, Ran
1980: "Notes on the Biblical and Extra-Biblical Onomastica." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 71: 107–17.
1988: *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography.* Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta. Leuven: Peeters.
1998: "On the Reliability of the Genealogical and Prosopographical Lists of the Israelites in the Old Testament." *Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University* 25: 228–54.
Zakovitz, Y.
1981: "The Woman's Rights in the Biblical Law of Divorce." *Jewish Law Review* 4: 28–46.
Zer Kavod, M.
1948: *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Cook.
1968: *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* [in Hebrew]. Society of Biblical Research in Israel. Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher.
1988: *Ezra and Nehemiah* [in Hebrew]. 5th ed. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Cook.
Zertal, A.
1990: "The *Pahwah* of Samaria (Northern Israel) During the Persian Period: Types of Settlement, Economy, History and New Discoveries." *Transeuphratène* 3: 9–30.
2003: "The Province of Samaria (Assyrian *Samerina*) in the Late Iron Age (Iron Age III)." Pages 377–412 in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, eds.
Zevit, Ziony
2009: "Is there an Archaeological Case for Phantom Settlements in the Persian Period?" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 141: 124–37.
Zlotnick-Sivan, H.
2000: "The Silent Women of Yehud: Notes on Ezra 9–10." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51: 3–18.
Zorn, Jeffrey
1997: "Mizpah: Newly Discovered Stratum Reveals Judah's Other Capital." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23: 28–39.
Zunz, Leopold
1832: "Dibre Hajamin oder die Bücher der Chronik." Pages 13–36 in Leopold Zunz. *Die gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt.* Berlin: A. Asher.

This page intentionally left blank

TRANSLATION

This page intentionally left blank

"To Build the House of YHWH": The Call and the Agenda of the Book

THE COMMISSIONING: GOD'S COMMAND AND CYRUS'S DECREE

1 [1]And in year one of Cyrus king of Persia, to complete the word of YHWH from the mouth of Jeremiah, YHWH roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he passed a proclamation throughout his whole kingdom, and also in a writ, saying:

[2]"'Thus said Cyrus king of Persia: 'All the kingdoms of the earth has YHWH, the God of heaven, given to me, and he appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem that is in Judah. [3]Who is among you of all his people? Let his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah, and let him build the house of YHWH the God of Israel, he is the God who is in Jerusalem. [4]And everyone who remains, from all the places where he sojourns, let the people of his place support him with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with livestock, together with the free offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.'"

THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE

[5]And the paternal heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with everyone whose spirit God has roused, arose to go up to build the house of YHWH that is in Jerusalem. [6]And all those around them strengthened their hands with silver vessels, with gold, with goods and with livestock and with choice gifts apart from all that was freely offered.

THE RECLAMATION OF THE TEMPLE VESSELS

[7]And the king, Cyrus, took out the vessels of the house of YHWH that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out from Jerusalem and had placed in the house of his gods. [8]And Cyrus, king of Persia, took them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the leader of Judah. [9]And these are their numbers: gold dishes: 30; silver dishes: 1,000; knives: 29. [10]Gold bowls: 30; second silver bowls: 410; other

vessels: 1,000. 11All vessels of gold and silver, 5,400. All did Sheshbazzar bring up with the going up of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

The List of Builders

INTRODUCTION AND THE LIST OF LEADERS

2 1And these are the sons of the province, those going up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had exiled to Babylonia; and they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his town, 2awho came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

THE LIST OF ISRAELITES

2bThe number of the men of the people of Israel: 3Sons of Parosh: 2,172. 4Sons of Shephatiah: 372. 5Sons of Arah: 775. 6Sons of Pahath-moab, of the sons of Jeshua, Joab: 2,812. 7Sons of Elam: 1,254. 8Sons of Zattu: 945. 9Sons of Zaccai: 760. 10Sons of Bani: 642. 11Sons of Bebai: 623. 12Sons of Azgad: 1,222. 13Sons of Adonikam: 666. 14Sons of Bigvai: 2,056. 15Sons of Adin: 454. 16Sons of Ater, of Hezekiah: 98. 17Sons of Bezai: 323. 18Sons of Jorah: 112. 19Sons of Hashum: 223. 20Sons of Gibbar: 95. 21Sons of Bethlehem: 123. 22Men of Netophah: 56. 23Men of Anathoth: 128. 24Sons of Azmaveth: 42. 25Sons of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth: 743. 26Sons of the Ramah and Geba: 621. 27Men of Michmas: 122. 28Men of Bethel and the Ai: 223. 29Sons of Nebo: 52. 30Sons of Magbish: 156. 31Sons of another Elam: 1,254. 32Sons of Harim: 320. 33Sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono: 725. 34Sons of Jericho: 345. 35Sons of Senaah: 3,630.

THE PRIESTS

36The priests: Sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua: 973. 37Sons of Immer: 1,052. 38Sons of Pashhur: 1,247. 39Sons of Harim: 1,017.

OTHER CULT PERSONNEL

40The Levites: Sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah: 74. 41The singers, sons of Asaph: 128. 42Sons of the gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai, in all: 139.

43The Netinim: Sons of Ziha, sons of Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, 44sons of Keros, sons of Siaha, sons of Padon, 45sons of Lebanah, sons of Hagabah, sons of Akkub, 46sons of Hagab, sons of Shamlai, sons of Hanan, 47sons of Giddel, sons of Gahar, sons of Reaiah, 48sons of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, sons of Gazzam, 49sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah, sons of Besai, 50sons of Asnah, sons of Meunim, sons of Nephisim, 51sons of Bakbuk, sons of Hakupha, sons of Harhur, 52sons of Bazluth, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha, 53sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, sons of Temah, 54sons of Neziah, sons of Hatipha.

55The sons of Solomon's servants: Sons of Sotai, sons of Hassophereth, sons of Peruda, 56sons of Jaalah, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, 57sons of Shephatiah, sons of Hattil, sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, sons of Ami.

58All the Netinim and the sons of Solomon's servants: 392.

CASES OF THE UNDOCUMENTED

59And these are the ones going up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, Immer, who were unable to tell their paternal household and their seed whether they are of Israel: 60Sons of Delaiah, sons of Tobiah, sons of Nekoda: 652. 61And of the sons of the priests: Sons of Habaiah, sons of Hakkoz, sons of Barzillai who had taken from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name. 62These, those registering, sought their written document and they were not found, and they were reckoned tainted with respect to the priesthood. 63And the *Tirshata* said to them that they should not eat of the holy of holies until there should rise a priest for the Urim and Thummim.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND ARRIVAL

64The whole congregation as one: 42,360, 65apart from their male slaves and their female slaves, these being 7,337; and they had male singers and female singers: 200. 66Their horses: 736; their mules: 245; 67their camels: 435; donkeys: 6,720.

68And some of the paternal heads, upon their coming to the house of YHWH that was in Jerusalem, freely offered to the house of God, to set it upon its established site. 69In accordance with their strength/ability they gave to the treasury for the work: gold darics: 61,000; and silver minas: 5,000; and priestly vestments: 100.

70 And the priests, and the Levites, and of the people, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim settled in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

Building YHWH's House, Stage One: The Temple

BEGINNING THE WORK: RESTORING THE ALTAR AND CULT AND FOUNDING THE TEMPLE

Restoring the Altar and Cult (According to the *torah* of Moses)

3 1And the seventh month approached, and the sons of Israel were in towns; and the people were gathered as one man to Jerusalem. 2And Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his brothers arose, and they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer up upon it burnt offerings as is written in the *torah* of Moses, the man of God. 3And they set up the altar upon its established settings, for the fear upon them from the peoples of the lands. And they offered up upon it burnt offerings to YHWH, burnt offerings for the morning and for the evening. 4And they observed the Festival of Sukkoth as it is written, and the burnt offering, each in its day, by number, according to the ordinance for each day in its day, 5and after that perpetual burnt offering, and that for the new moons, and for all the sanctified appointed seasons of YHWH, and for every one freely offering a freewill offering to YHWH. 6From day one of the seventh month they began to offer up burnt offerings to YHWH and the temple of YHWH had not been founded. 7And they gave silver to the quarriers/masons and craftsmen, and food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and Tyrians, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the Sea of Jaffa in accordance with the authorization of Cyrus king of Persia concerning them.

Founding the Temple

[8]And in the second year of their coming to the house of God, to Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests, and the Levites and all those coming from captivity to Jerusalem, began; and they appointed the Levites from twenty years and upward to orchestrate the work of the house of YHWH. [9]And Jeshua, his sons and brothers, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, stood up as one, to orchestrate those doing the work in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, their sons and brothers, the Levites.

[10]And the builders founded the temple of YHWH and they appointed the priests, attired, with trumpets, and the Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise YHWH according to David king of Israel. [11]And they responded with praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, "For he is good. For his generous love is forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted a great shout at the praise of YHWH because the house of YHWH had been founded. [12]And many of the priests and the Levites and the patriarchal heads, the old ones who had seen the first house on its foundation, this house before their eyes, were weeping in a loud voice, and many raised voice with a shout, with joy. [13]And the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the people's weeping because the people were shouting a great shout and the sound was heard far away.

THE OBSTACLE: OUTSIDERS IMPEDE REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

Interference by Foreign Adversaries

4 [1]And the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the exiles were building a temple to YHWH the God of Israel. [2]And they approached Zerubbabel and the paternal heads and said to them: "We will build with you, for like you we seek your God, and to him we have been sacrificing since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us up here." [3]And Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the paternal heads of Israel said to them: "It is not for you and for us to build a house for our God, for we together will build for YHWH the God of Israel, as the king, Cyrus king of Persia, commanded us."

[4]And the people of the land were slackening the hands of the people of Judah and frightening them from building, [5]and hiring against them counselors to thwart their plan all the days of Cyrus king of Persia until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Three Examples of Foreign Interference

[6]And in the reign of Ahasuerus, at the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against those settled in Judah and Jerusalem.

[7]And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his associates wrote to Artaxerxes; and the writing in the document was written in Aramaic and transmitted in Aramaic. [8]Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows. [9]Then Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates the judges, the envoys, the counselors, the Persians, the Erechites, the Babylonians, the Susaites, that

is Elamites, [10]and the rest of the nations that the great and noble Osnappar exiled and settled them in the city of Samaria, and the rest of the Across-the-River. And now: [11]This is a copy of the letter that they sent to him:

"To Artaxerxes the king: your servants, the men of Across-the-River. And now: [12]Be it made known to the king that the Judeans who had gone from you came to us, to Jerusalem. They are building the rebellious and wicked city and they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. [13]And now, be it made known to the king that if this city will be built and if the walls will be finished, they will not pay toll-tax, tribute, and levy, and royal revenue will be harmed. [14]Now, because we salt with the salt of the palace and it is not proper for us to see the nakedness of the king, we therefore send and make it known to the king, [15]so that one should investigate the book of memoranda of your ancestors and you will find in the book of memoranda and you will know that this city is a rebellious city and harmful to kings and provinces, and sedition had been at work in its midst from days of old; on that account this city had been destroyed. [16]We make it known to the king that if that city will be built and its walls finished, then you will have no portion in Across-the-River."

Results: Artaxerxes' Response Stops the Work

[17]The message that the king sent to Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who were settled in Samaria and in the rest of Across-the-River: "Peace. And now, [18]the document that you sent to us has been read distinctly before me. [19]And an order has been issued by me and they investigated and found that this city, from days of old, has been rising against kings and rebellion and sedition are at work in it. [20]And there were powerful kings over Jerusalem, and they ruled over all of Across-the-River, and toll-tax, tribute, and levy were given to them. [21]Now, issue an order to stop those men; and that city should not be built until there be issued an order from me. [22]And be careful not to be negligent about this. Why should the damage increase to harm kings?"

[23]Then as soon as a copy of the document of Artaxerxes the king was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Judeans and stopped them with armed soldiers. [24]Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped and was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

OBSTACLES OVERCOME: SUCCESSFUL REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Renewed Building Activities and Inquiry

5 [1]And Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Berachiah son of Iddo the prophets prophesied to the Judeans in Yehud and in Jerusalem in the name of Israel's God upon them. [2]Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak rose up to build the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and with them the prophets of God supporting them.

[3]At that time Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and said thus to them: "Who issued you an order to build this house and to finish this structure?" [4]Then we said to them as follows: "What

are the names of the men who are building this building?" [5]And the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Judeans and they did not stop them until an order would go to Darius and then they would return a document concerning this.

[6]A copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the envoys of Across-the-River, sent to Darius the king. [7]The message they sent to him; and this is what was written in it: "To Darius the king, all peace! [8]Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Yehud to the house of the great God and it is being built with hewn stone, and timber is placed in its walls; and its work is being done diligently and succeeds in their hands. [9]Then we asked of those elders. We said to them as follows: 'Who issued you an order to build this house and to finish this structure?' [10]And we also asked them their names, to let you know, that we might write the names of the men according to their heads. [11]And thus the message they returned, saying: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are building this house which was built many years before this; and a great king of Israel built it and finished it. [12]But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean; and this house he tore down, and the people he exiled to Babylon. [13]However, in year one of Cyrus, king of Babylon, Cyrus the king issued an order to build this house of God. [14]And even the vessels of the house of God, of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar took out from the temple in Jerusalem and brought with him to the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out from the temple in Babylon and they were given to [one], Sheshbazzar is his name, whom he placed as governor. [15]And he said to him: "Carry these vessels, go, deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be built on its place." [16]Then that Sheshbazzar came, set the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem, and since then till now it is being built and it is not complete.' [17]And now, if it seems good to the king, let it be investigated in the royal treasure houses there in Babylon if by Cyrus an order was issued to build this house of God that is in Jerusalem, and let the king send us his wish concerning this."

King Darius's Supportive Response

6 [1]Then Darius the king issued an order and they investigated in the archives where the treasures are deposited there in Babylon. [2]And in Ecbatana, in the capital of the province of Media, a scroll was found and thus written in it: "Memorandum: [3]In year one of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued an order: Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, the house shall be built, a place for sacrificing sacrifices; and the foundations supported; its height: 60 cubits; its width: 60 cubits, [4]layers of hewn stone: three; and a layer of timber: one; and the expenses be given from the house of the king. [5]And also the vessels of the house of God, of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar took out from the temple of Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, they will bring back and let it go to the temple in Jerusalem, to its place, deposited in the house of God.

[6]"Now Tattenai, governor of Across-the-River, Shethar-bozenai and their associates, the envoys who are in Across-the-River, be far from there. [7]Leave to the work of this house of God the governor of the Judeans and the elders of the Judeans. Let them build this house on its place. [8]And an order has been issued by me as to what you will do for these elders of the Judeans for the building of this house of God. And from the possessions of the king, of taxes from Across-the-River, exact expenses are to be given

to these men diligently to not stop. [9]And whatever is needed, young bulls and rams and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, in accordance with what the priests in Jerusalem say, let it be given to them day by day without fail; [10]so that they will make offerings of sweet savor to the God of heaven and will pray for the life of the king and his sons. [11]And an order has been issued by me that any person who will alter this message, a beam will be torn out of his house; and he will be lifted up and impaled upon it, and his house will be made into a dunghill on account of this. [12]And may the God who causes his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put forth a hand to alter or damage this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius have issued an order. Let it be done diligently."

Results: The Temple and Its Cult Are Fully Restored

[13]Then Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates, according to that which Darius the king sent, so they did diligently. [14]And the elders of the Judeans were building and succeeding through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo, and they built and finished according to the order of the God of Israel and the order of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. [15]And this house was completed by the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

[16]And the sons of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the sons of exile, made the dedication of this house with gladness. [17]And they sacrificed for the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and male goats for the purification offering for all Israel: twelve for the number of the tribes of Israel. [18]And they appointed the priests according to their sections and Levites according to their divisions for the service of the God who is in Jerusalem in accordance with the writing of the book of Moses.

CELEBRATING THE CONCLUSION OF STAGE ONE: PASSOVER/FESTIVAL OF THE UNLEAVENED BREAD

[19]And the sons of exile made the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month. [20]For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves as one, all of them pure, and they slaughtered the Passover for all the sons of exile and for their brothers the priests and for themselves. [21]And the sons of Israel ate, the ones returning from exile and all those who separated to them from the pollution of the nations of the land to seek YHWH the God of Israel. [22]And they made the Festival of the Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for YHWH made them joyful and turned the heart of the king of Assyria concerning them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Building YHWH's House, Stage Two: The People

INTRODUCTION OF PROTAGONISTS AND MISSION

The Narrator's Introduction of Ezra and His Mission

7 [1]And after these things in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra, son of Seraiah son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, [2]son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

[3]son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, [4]son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, [5]son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the head priest, [6]he, Ezra, went up from Babylon; and he was a scribe skilled in the *torah* of Moses that YHWH, the God of Israel, had given; and the king gave him, in accordance with the hand of YHWH his God upon him, his entire request.

[7]And some of the sons of Israel and of the priests and the Levites and the singers and the gatekeepers and the Netinim went up to Jerusalem in year seven of Artaxerxes the king. [8]And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, it being the seventh year of the king. [9]For on the first of the first month was the founding of the going up from Babylon and in the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem in accordance with the good hand of his God upon him. [10]For Ezra prepared his heart to seek the *torah* of YHWH and to do and to teach in Israel law and ordinance.

King Artaxerxes' Introduction of Ezra and His Mission

[11]And this is a copy of the document that the king, Artaxerxes, gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, scribe of the words of YHWH's commandments and his laws concerning Israel. [12]"Artaxerxes king of kings to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, etc., and now: [13]An order has been issued by me that everyone in my kingdom from the people Israel and its priests and Levites who freely offers to go to Jerusalem with you, let him go. [14]For [you are] sent from before the king and his seven counselors to investigate concerning Yehud and Jerusalem with the law of your God that is in your hand, [15]and to bring silver and gold that the king and his counselors freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, [16]and all silver and gold that you find in all of the province of Babylonia, with the free offering of the people and the priests who are freely offered to the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. [17]Because of this you will diligently buy with this silver young bulls, rams, lambs, and their meal offerings and their libations, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. [18]And whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold—in accordance with the will of your God—do. [19]And the vessels that are given to you for the cult service of the house of your God, deliver fully before the God of Jerusalem. [20]And the rest of the necessities of the house of your God that will fall upon you to give, give from the treasury of the king.

[21]"And from me, King Artaxerxes, an order has been issued to all the treasurers who are in Across-the-River that all that Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, asks of you be done diligently, [22]up to one hundred talents of silver, and up to 100 *kors* of wheat, and up to 100 *baths* of wine, and up to 100 *baths* of oil, and salt without accounting. [23]All that is the order of the God of heaven let it be done with all haste for the house of the God of heaven, for why should there be wrath upon the kingdom of the king and his sons? [24]And we are making it known to you concerning all the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim, and cult servants of this house of God, that it is not authorized to impose upon them toll-tax, and tribute and levy.

[25]"And you Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges and let them judge all the people who are in Across-the-River, all who know the laws of your God; and whoever does not know, make it known to them. [26]And anyone who does not do the law of your God and the

law of the king, let judgment be done to him diligently, either death or uprooting or confiscation of property and imprisonment."

Ezra's Response to Artaxerxes' Letter

[27]Blessed is YHWH, the God of our fathers, who gave such as this in the heart of the king to adorn the house of YHWH which is in Jerusalem; [28]and toward me inclined generous love before the king and his counselors and all the king's mighty officers; and I was strengthened in accordance with the hand of YHWH my God upon me, and I gathered from Israel heads to go up with me.

Ezra's Companions

8 [1]And these are their paternal heads and their registration, the ones going up with me in the reign of Artaxerxes the king from Babylon. [2]Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the sons of David, Hattush. [3]Of the sons of Shecaniah. Of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him registered according to males: 150. [4]Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him the males: 200. [5]Of the sons of Shecaniah, son of Jehaziel, and with him the males: 300. [6]And of the sons of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him the males: 50. [7]And of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him the males: 70. [8]And of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him the males: 80. [9]Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him the males: 218. [10]And of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah, and with him the males: 160. [11]And of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him the males: 28. [12]And of the sons of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him the males: 110. [13]And of the sons of Adonikam, the last ones, and these are their names: Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them the males: 60. [14]And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with him the males: 70.

INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TASK

Assembly and Recruiting of Levites

[15]And I gathered them by the river that comes to Ahava, and we camped there three days; and I discerned the people and the priests, and I did not find there from the sons of Levi. [16]And I sent for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah and for Meshullam, heads, and for Joiarib and for Elnathan, discerning ones. [17]And I sent them out to Iddo, the head in Casiphia, the place, and I put words in their mouth to speak to Iddo, [and?] his brother located in Casiphia, the place, to bring to us attendants for the house of our God. [18]And they brought to us, in accordance with the good hand of God upon us, a man of good sense of the sons of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers: 18, [19]and Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons: 20. [20]And of the Netinim whom David and the chiefs had given to the service of the Levites, Netinim: 220, all inscribed by name.

Final Preparations

[21]And I called there a fast, by the river Ahava, for self-humbling before our God to beseech him for a straight way for ourselves and our little ones and for all our goods. [22]For

I was ashamed to ask of the king for army and horsemen to help us against enemies on the way, for we had said to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is for good upon all who beseech him, and his might and anger are upon all who forsake him." [23]And we fasted and beseeched our God concerning this and he hearkened to us.

[24]And I separated twelve from the chiefs of the priests to Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers. [25]And I weighed to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, raised offering to the house of our God that the king and his counselors and his chiefs, and all Israel that were found, had raised. [26]And I weighed into their hands silver: 650 talents; and silver vessels: 100; by talents, gold: 100 talents; [27]and gold bowls: 20 of 1,000 darics; and vessels of good bronze, gleaming: 2, as precious as gold. [28]And I said to them: "You are consecrated to YHWH and the vessels are consecrated; and the silver and the gold are a free offering to YHWH the God of your fathers. [29]Be vigilant and guard until you weigh [them] before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and the paternal chiefs of Israel in Jerusalem, [in] the chambers of the house of YHWH." [30]And the priests and Levites received the weight of silver and gold and the vessels to bring to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

Journey and Arrival in Jerusalem

[31]And we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he saved us from the palm of enemy and ambush on the way. [32]And we came to Jerusalem and settled there three days. [33]And on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed at the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, and with him Eleazar son of Phinehas; and with them Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui the Levites, [34]everything by number and by weight; and all the weight was written down at that time.

[35]Those coming from the captivity, the sons of the exile, sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: bulls: twelve for all Israel; rams: ninety-six; lambs: seventy-seven; goats for purification offering: twelve—all burnt offering to YHWH. [36]And they gave the laws of the king to the king's satraps and the governors of Across-the-River; and they raised up the people and the house of God.

THE OBSTACLE: MARRIAGES WITH THE PEOPLES OF THE LANDS

The Obstacle Discovered

9 [1]And when these were finished, the chiefs approached me saying, "The people Israel, and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, in their abominations like the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. [2]For they have taken up some of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and the consecrated seed has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; and the hand of the chiefs and officials has been first in this sacrilege."

Ezra's Response

[3]And upon my hearing this thing, I tore my garment and mantle; and I plucked hair from my head and beard, and sat desolate. [4]And unto me gathered every one trembling at the words of the God of Israel concerning the sacrilege of the exile; and I was sitting desolate until the evening grain offering.

[5]And at the evening grain offering I rose up from my self-affliction and my tearing my garment and my mantle, and I dropped to my knees, and spread out my palms to YHWH my God. [6]And I said: "My God, I am ashamed and mortified to lift up, my God, my face toward you, for our iniquities increased to above the head, and our guilt has grown to the heavens. [7]From the days of our fathers we have been in great guilt, to this day; and in our iniquities we were given—we, our kings, our priests—into the hands of the kings of the lands, by the sword, by captivity, and by plunder, and by shamefacedness, as on this day. [8]And now, for almost a moment there was for us favor from YHWH our God to let there remain for us survivors, and to give us a stake in his consecrated place, to illumine our eyes, our God, and to give us a little sustenance in our servitude. [9]For we are slaves, and in our servitude our God has not forsaken us; and he bestowed upon us generous love before the kings of Persia to give us sustenance, to raise up the house of our God and to restore its ruins, and to give us a fence in Judah and in Jerusalem.

[10]"And now, what can we say, our God, after this? For we have forsaken your commandments [11]that you commanded by the hand of your servants the prophets, saying: 'The land that you are coming to inherit is a land of blood pollution/menstruation with the blood pollution/menstruation of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that filled her from mouth to mouth with their impurity. [12]And now, your daughters do not give to their sons, and their daughters do not take up for your sons, and you shall not seek out their peace and their well-being ever, in order that you will be strengthened and eat the good of the land, and bequeath [it] to your sons forever.' [13]And after all that has come upon us through our evil deeds and our great guilt—for you, our God, had held back some of our iniquities, and gave us survivors such as these—[14]shall we return to thwart your commandments and to wed these peoples of abominations? Will you not rage against us and bring complete destruction, with no remnant and survivors? [15]YHWH, God of Israel, you are righteous, for we remain survivors as on this day; here we are before you in our guilt, for there is no standing before you on account of this."

THE OBSTACLE OVERCOME: THE COMMUNITY RESOLVES TO SEPARATE FROM FOREIGN WIVES AND PROHIBIT EXOGAMY

Communal Response and Shecaniah's Proposal

10 [1]And as Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, there gathered around him from Israel a very large congregation: men, women, and children, for the people wept with much weeping. [2]And Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, responded and said to Ezra: "We have committed sacrilege against our God, and we have settled foreign women from the peoples of

the land. And now there is hope for Israel concerning this. [3]And now, let us make a covenant with our God to send out all women and any who is born from them, with the counsel of the Lord and of those trembling at the commandment of our God; and according to the *torah* it shall be done. [4]Rise up, for the task is yours and we are with you; be strong and act." [5]And Ezra rose up and made the chiefs of the priests and Levites and all Israel swear to act in accordance with this word and they swore. [6]And Ezra rose up from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib; and he went there; bread he did not eat and water he did not drink, for he was in mourning over the sacrilege of the exiles.

Communal Decision and Its Implementation

[7]And they passed a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem for all the sons of the exile to assemble in Jerusalem. [8]And anyone who does not come within three days, in accordance with the counsel of the chiefs and the elders, all his goods will be banned, and he will be separated from the congregation of the exile.

[9]And all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within three days, it being the ninth month on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the plaza of the house of God, shivering because of the matter and from the rains. [10]And Ezra the priest rose up and said to them: "You have committed sacrilege and settled foreign women, to add to Israel's guilt. [11]And now make a confession/give praise to YHWH, the God of your fathers, and do his will; and separate from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women." [12]And the whole congregation responded and said in a loud voice: "Indeed, in accordance with your words we must do. [13]But the people are numerous and it is the season of rains, and there is no strength to stand outside; and the work is not for a day and not for two, for we greatly trespassed in this matter. [14]Let our chiefs stand up for all the congregation, and everyone in our towns who had settled foreign women will come at the appointed time, and with them the elders of each town and its judges until the fierce anger of our God over this matter turns back from us." [15]But only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah stood up over this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

[16]And the sons of the exile did so. And they separated—Ezra the priest, men, paternal heads according to their paternal household—and all of them by name; and they sat on day one of the tenth month to inquire into the matter. [17]And they finished with all the men who had settled foreign women by day one of the first month.

Results and Conclusion

[18]And it was found among the sons of the priests who had settled foreign women: Of the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah and Eliezer and Jarib, and Gedaliah. [19]And they gave their hand to send out their wives, and, guilty, a ram of the flock for their guilt. [20]Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. [21]And of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah. [22]And of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

[23]And of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (who is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. [24]And of the singers: Eliashib. And of the gatekeepers: Shallum, and Tellem, and Uri.

[25]And of Israel: Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah. [26]And of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. [27]And of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. [28]And of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zebbai, Athlai. [29]And of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. [30]And of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. [31]And the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, [32]Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. [33]Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. [34]Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel, [35]Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, [36]Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, [37]Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu, [38]and Bani and Binnui, Shimei, [39]and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah. [40]Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai. [41]Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah. [42]Shallum, Amariah, Joseph. [43]Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, and Joel, Benaiah. [44]All these had taken up foreign women, and of them were women who established sons.

This page intentionally left blank

NOTES AND COMMENTS

This page intentionally left blank

I.

"To Build the House of YHWH": The Call and the Agenda of the Book (1:1–11)

Introduction and Structure

Ezra-Nehemiah (EN) heralds a new era in biblical history, one that begins with a charge to rebuild YHWH's house in Jerusalem. King Cyrus authorizes the rebuilding (Ezra 1:1–4). Ezra 1:5–6 confirms that God's people undertook the task. The restoration of the vessels (1:7–11) signals the reversal of the Babylonian destruction of the temple. The rest of the book describes how the people built God's house in three stages (Ezra 2–Neh 7) and celebrated their success (Neh 8–13).

EN anchors the book's account of return and reconstruction in Judah at the turning point of ANE history: the establishment of the Persian Empire under Cyrus (539–538 BCE). While acknowledging Persian imperial power, EN nonetheless makes Cyrus but a conduit for God's mission for Israel. The opening verses also introduce three basic themes that emerge from EN's historiography: the significance of the written text, the centrality of the people as a whole (not simply the leaders), and YHWH's house in Jerusalem as a focus. As EN unfolds, however, YHWH's house comes to encompass more than the temple. It includes the entire city. At the same time, Ezra 1:3 brings the question of identity to the fore: Who counts as God's people? This question reverberates throughout the book.

Key scholarly debates about the opening verses revolve around the date, authorship, and reliability of Cyrus's decree, and the historicity of a return.

The main structure of Ezra 1:1–11 is as follows:

A. The commissioning: God's command and Cyrus's decree (1:1–4)
B. The people's response (1:5–6)
C. The reclamation of the temple vessels (1:7–11)

A. The Commissioning: God's Command and Cyrus's Decree (1:1–4)

1 [1]And in year one of Cyrus king of Persia, to complete the word of YHWH from the mouth of Jeremiah, YHWH roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and he passed a proclamation throughout his whole kingdom, and also in a writ, saying:

[2]"Thus said Cyrus king of Persia: 'All the kingdoms of the earth has YHWH, the God of heaven, given to me, and he appointed me to build him a house in Jerusalem that is in Judah. [3]Who is among you of all his people? Let his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah, and let him build the house of YHWH the God of Israel, he is the God who is in Jerusalem. [4]And everyone who remains, from all the places where he sojourns, let the people of his place support him with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with livestock, together with the free offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.'"

Introduction

Cyrus's decree defines the goals of the entire book: to build YHWH's house in Jerusalem. The community rather than leaders become the chief human protagonists who build. The emphasis on Jerusalem (mentioned in every verse) suggests polemics against other sanctuaries. Scholars debate about the historical reliability of Cyrus's decree and its stipulations, but the central message is clear: God and a foreign king, in fulfillment of Jeremiah's words, authorize the restoration of God's house.

The virtual repetition of Ezra 1:1–3a in 2 Chr 36:22–23 led interpreters since the nineteenth century to consider EN and Chronicles a single, unified work. But as Japhet (1968, 1989 [original Hebrew 1977]) has shown conclusively, the two are separate works with different vocabulary and ideology.

Notes

1:1. *And in year one of Cyrus king of Persia.* In conquering Babylon in 539 BCE, Cyrus annexed Babylonia's territories, thereby creating the largest empire in the history of the ANE. The implicit date here is 538 BCE, shortly after the conquest (see Williamson 1985, 8). EN aims to show that the king considers God's house in Jerusalem a high priority.

Like several other postexilic texts (see Hag 1:1, Zech 1:1), Ezra 1:1 uses Persian regnal years as markers for national chronology. Such practice is common in Persian-period documents, including the fifth-century BCE Elephantine papyri (see, e.g., *TAD* B 3.3.1 // Kraeling 2). The date reflects accommodation to Persian sovereignty as a frame within which to construct Israel's own life and identity. However, EN gradually shifts to Judean demarcations (see Neh 12:1–26). Like most narrative books in the Bible, EN begins with the conjunction "and" (see, e.g., Exod 1:1, 1 Kgs 1:1, Esth 1:1).

Cyrus king of Persia. Cyrus II (*kôreš* in Hebrew; *kürosh* in Persian), known as Cyrus the Great (559–530 BCE), initially ruled over Persia but quickly conquered the other great kingdoms, extending his reign to what is now Iran, Iraq, Turkey, the Levant, and beyond. Extant biblical and Greek sources portray Cyrus sympathetically (see "The Persian Empire [539–332 BCE]" in the Introduction). Isaiah 45:1–7 hails him as God's anointed destined to liberate Israel.

king of Persia. This title, first used by Darius I (Japhet 2019, 52), is anachronistic here.

to complete. Heb. *likhlôt,* from *k.l.h.* The LXX has *telesthēnai.* Most English translations use here forms of "fulfilled" (so NJPS; NRSV has "be accomplished"). This tendency undoubtedly depends on 2 Chr 36:21, which has "to fulfill," *lĕmall'ôt.*

from the mouth of Jeremiah. The parallel in 2 Chr 36:22 has *bĕpî,* "in the mouth." Commentators, ancient and modern, typically link this reference to Jer 25:11–12 and 29:10, which anticipate the destruction of Babylon and the return from exile after a seventy-year period. So also does Josephus, who refers here, however, to Isaiah (*Ant.* XI.1–2). The temple was indeed rebuilt in 516/515 BCE, some seventy years after its destruction. Other Jeremianic expectations may be at work: the return of the temple's vessels in Jer 27:16–22 and 28:4–5 (the subject of Ezra 1:7–11), and Jer 51:11 (where God awakens the spirit of the kings of the Medes). Williamson (1985, 9–10) considers also an allusion to Cyrus's role as builder of the temple.

Batten (1913, 56–57) suggests that EN originally mentioned Isaiah, not Jeremiah, but that the name dropped out because of an early textual error. Bickerman (1946, 270), however, suggests that EN deliberately avoids allusion to Second Isaiah's message about Cyrus with its messianic formulation because EN is eager to depict him as a "simple instrument of the [*sic*] Providence."

YHWH roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia. EN emphasizes that YHWH is the power that initiates events. To make this point, the narrator adopts an omniscient perspective, ascribing a motive to God. While omniscient perspectives are common throughout biblical narratives, they are rare in EN, highlighting events of exceptional importance. The launching of the restoration of Judah is such an exceptional event. This also introduces EN's theological stance: God works through human agents.

roused. Heb. *hē'îr,* from *'.w.r.,* to awaken. The LXX has *exēgeiren.* God will likewise rouse the people themselves (Ezra 1:5). In Jer 51:11, "YHWH roused the spirit of the kings of Media." In Hag 1:14, this verb describes the rousing of the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua and the rest of the people who then undertake building the temple in King Darius's time.

Cyrus. The spelling of the king's name here and in v. 2, as well as in 2 Chr 36:23, is without the *waw* of the earlier reference. EN's spelling of names is often inconsistent.

and he passed a proclamation. Heb. *wayyaʿăbher-qôl,* lit. "passed a voice." The expression reflects the common ancient practice of sending heralds (see Herodotus, *Hist.* III.62; Xenophon, *Anab.* II, 1.7; note also Esth 1:19–20, 22, etc.). The sentence enacts a transfer from a (hidden?) divine origin to a perceptible human agent. This shift is more than a mere grammatical point. It characterizes EN's view of the relationship between God and humanity: God works indirectly, through human instruments.

and also in a writ. For EN, the written word is a source of authority and a crucial force for shaping human events.

also. Heb. *gam.* "Also" foregrounds the written form of the decree (not rendering it parenthetical as Williamson 1985, 3–4 n. 1d, suggests). The LXX preserves the emphasis. According to BDB, "also" can emphasize "the thought of an entire sentence but more usually the word immediately following."

in a writ. Heb. *bĕmikhtāb.* The other seven occurrences of this form (not counting the parallel in 2 Chr 36:22) refer to special authoritative writings (often engraved), such

as the Mosaic tablets (Exod 32:16 [twice] and Deut 10:4), a prophetic message (2 Chr 21:12, i.e., Elijah's writing), and an inscription on Aaron's consecrated diadem (Exod 39:30). This term places Cyrus's decree on a par with other decisive writings.

1:2. *Thus said Cyrus king of Persia.* Like prophetic texts and some Persian decrees, Cyrus's decree begins with the typical messenger formula, "Thus said" (see the Behistun Inscription, line 50, in Cowley 1923). Cyrus's title here is brief when compared with that in the Cyrus Cylinder ("I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, . . . son of Cambyses . . . , great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan"; Pritchard 2011; *ANET* 315–16, 282). Emphasis will fall on God's house in Jerusalem, not on the monarch.

All the kingdoms of the earth. The Persian Empire during Cyrus's time encompassed today's Iraq, Iran, and the Near East, including Turkey, the Levant, and more (see fig. 1). Nevertheless, much remained outside Cyrus's control, including Greece and Egypt.

YHWH. The reference to Israel's God might seem odd in a document credited to a Persian king. But this resembles the Cyrus Cylinder, where Cyrus (presumably a worshipper of Ahuramazda) credits the Babylonian god with commissioning him. Later Persian kings will likewise declare themselves representatives of other peoples' gods (i.e., Cambyses in Egypt).

the God of heaven. This phrase connotes divine transcendence. As a neutral reference to the deity, it can convey different meanings to different groups, as does the use of "Lord" by Jews and Christians. The phrase appears often in ancient writings, but in the Bible it is most common in EN (thirteen times of a total of twenty-two; Chronicles uses it only in 2 Chr 36:23, the parallel to this verse). It is also common in Elephantine (e.g., *TAD* A 4.7.2, 27–28 // Cowley 30).

Holmgren (1987, 8) supposes that the phrase "in the context of Persian-Jewish communication, may exhibit a recognition of something authentic in Persian religion. It is apparent that the author of the book of Ezra believes that the Jews are talking about the same God." More likely, the language reflects a Judean attempt to show that Persian authorities recognize the worship of Israel's God as an officially sanctioned religion, thereby qualifying for cultic support (Williamson 1985, 12).

appointed me. Heb. *pāqad ʿālay.* In accord with ANE practice, Cyrus is portrayed as the divinely commissioned sponsor of the temple's rebuilding. However, in a surprise move distinctive to EN, he will delegate the task to the people.

to build him a house. Cyrus appears here as YHWH's messenger, commissioned to build a house. The Hebrew word *bayit,* "house," carries diverse meanings that require context for precise interpretation. Although there is agreement that Cyrus's decree refers to the temple, a distinctive term for "temple" (*hēkhāl* or *miqdāš*) is not used here. In Hebrew and other ANE languages, "house" can refer to a dwelling place (even a room), a palace, a temple, a family or clan, or a household (cf. God's promise to David that he will build him a house, i.e., dynasty; see 2 Sam 7). The Aramaic version of Cyrus's memorandum in Ezra 6:5 specifies *hēkhĕlāʾ* when referring to Jerusalem's temple. The omission of *hēkhāl,* "temple," in Ezra 1:1–4 is significant. In EN rebuilding God's house encompasses not only the temple but the city as a whole, culminating with Jerusalem as a consecrated city (Neh 11:1, 18).

One rabbinic tradition considers this second temple inferior to the first precisely because it was built by a Persian king and not a Judean one, while another blames this

inferiority on the Judeans who did not return from Babylonia (Yoma 9b). For EN, Cyrus initiates the process only at God's command. The people themselves—not a Persian king or even a Judean ruler—build YHWH's house in Jerusalem.

in Jerusalem that is in Judah. The repetition of this phrase in both v. 2 and v. 3 underscores the importance of Jerusalem and Judah as God's unique dwelling, authorized by the Persian Empire from the very beginning. According to Williamson (1985, 12), "this is typical bureaucratic pedantry." But the degree to which Ezra 1 insists upon linking YHWH's house with Jerusalem is exceptional.

Judah. Heb. *yĕhûdâ,* the Hebrew term for the territory or province. The Aramaic portions in Ezra (e.g., Ezra 7:14) use *yĕhûd,* as do the hundreds of Persian-period seals and bullae from Judah (see Lipschits 2011a and Vanderhooft 2003). The mention of "Judah" rather than "Yehud" suggests a Judean hand at work.

1:3. *Who is among you of all his people? Let his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem.* The decree openly addresses all God's people wherever they may be. EN and other biblical and extrabiblical sources attest to widespread Judean communities during the Persian period. Nehemiah, for example, comes from Susa, whereas Ezra comes from Babylonia. The Murashu and Egibi records from Babylonia, documents from Elephantine, Egypt, and those from Al Yahudu, Babylonia, indicate that exiles from Judah made themselves at home in a number of places in Babylonia and Egypt (as Jer 29 recommends). But the decree does not necessarily refer only to diasporic communities; it may include those already in the land.

Who is among you of all his people? The statement can be a question (as rendered here) or a rhetorical affirmation, like *mî-kāmōkhâ* in Exod 15:11. The LXX has *tis en hymin apo,* which preserves the ambiguity, whereas 1 Esd 2:3 has a more explicit question: *ei tis estin oun hymōn* ("If any of you"). The NRSV has "Any of those among you who are of his people," which is possible; the NJPS translates it similarly. The phrase is interrogative rather than an indefinite "whoever." Cyrus's decree is both an invitation and a challenge: Who, indeed, counts as God's people? This phrase brings to the fore the issue of identity that unfolds in the book. It points to what Rom-Shiloni (2013, 253) considers an ongoing question beginning in 597 BCE: Given the presence of Judeans in diaspora and in the land, "which of the two communities could still consider itself and claim to be God's people?"

Let his God be with him. Bickerman (1946, 258) notes that this expression "belongs to the standard for oriental messages." The wordplay of *ʿammô,* "his people," above and *ʿimmô,* "with him," composed of the same three Hebrew letters, adds emphasis to people as the central subject.

let him go up. Second Chronicles ends with this sentence. The jussive signals an exhortation, a cross between permission and command.

to Jerusalem that is in Judah, and let him build the house of YHWH. God's people are now commissioned to build. The decree does not commission specifically appointed people but rather invites any and all of God's people. Note the repetition of "Jerusalem" in Ezra 1:2, 3 (twice), and 4.

The statement is typically considered a mandate for deportees to return to Judah. Although deportation was commonplace in the ancient world, return was not. Still, the Babylonian Cyrus Cylinder does provide for restoring gods to their "homes" in temples and cities. Elsewhere, tablets found in the 1920s in today's Syria show that

some deportees to Babylonia from Neirab, Syria, were able to return to their homeland (Hoglund 1992, 27; Timm 1995; Alstola 2020, 237–50).

the God of Israel, he is the God who is in Jerusalem. The emphasis on Jerusalem through repetition is striking (four times in three verses), as are the different terms for the house of God/YHWH and for God/YHWH. Polemics against other sanctuaries in Judah or Samaria are likely in view. The reference "God of Israel" may also be polemical if others (Samaria?) also claimed Israel as a name (see Stahl 2020, esp. 725–26, 737–44; 2021, 271–72).

1:4. *And everyone who remains, from all the places where he sojourns, let the people of his place support him.* The decree authorizes support for the project, but the details are obscure, given some uncertainties in translation. Support apparently is to come from local resources. This contrasts with the memorandum in Ezra 6:3–5 where Cyrus authorizes resources from the royal treasury.

The ambiguous syntax yields several possible meanings with different understandings of the Hebrew *hanniš'ār m-,* "who remains from," which the LXX translates as *kataleipomenos.* This can refer to whoever survived exile and now plans to go up to Judah (the theological idea of "remnant") or to whoever plans to remain in diaspora, who will nonetheless be represented by contributions.

where he sojourns. Heb. *'ăšer hû' gār šām.* The LXX has *paroikei,* which, like the Hebrew, implies temporary residence as a stranger.

support him. Heb. *yĕnaśśĕ'ûhû,* from *n.ś.a.* in the *piel,* meaning literally "lift him up," "carry," or "support," either physically or metaphorically (including the sense of "extol"). The LXX has *lēmpsontai,* "to take" or "to receive" (but see the LXX use of a form of "extol" for this Hebrew verb in Ezra 8:36).

with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with livestock. This may be standard language for provisions. The permission in the decree to transfer funds and possessions is significant; it reverses the normal imperial policy that demands the flow of silver and gold from the provinces to the royal court.

free offering. Heb. *nĕdābâ,* a common term for donations, typically to the cult (see 2 Chr 31:14, 35:8). Williamson (1985, 15) supposes that "freewill-offering" may have technical priestly connotations here. Most likely, Ezra 1:4 harks back to the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 35. There too, as here, we find *n.ś.a.* and *n.d.b.* when the Israelites gather their gold, silver, fabrics, and jewelry to provide material for the construction of the tabernacle: "And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred [*nĕśā'ô,* from *n.ś.a.*] and everyone whose spirit was willing [*nādĕbâ*], and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting" (Exod 35:21, NRSV). Exodus 35:29 mentions similar donations to the tabernacle. EN may echo and evoke the enthusiasm for the earlier tabernacle, now channeled into rebuilding God's house in Jerusalem.

the house of God that is in Jerusalem. One final mention of the house, God, and Jerusalem (fourth time) provides a fitting climax to Cyrus's decree.

Comments

Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:1–4 is not attested in extrabiblical sources but was nevertheless regarded as a genuine account until the modern era. New sources since the nineteenth century tended to buttress faith in the decree's authenticity, showing that aspects of Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:1–4 comport with Persian-period practices. The discovery in

Babylon of the Cyrus Cylinder in 1879 particularly increased trust in the biblical account. This small clay inscription (23 centimeters long and 10 centimeters wide) records in Akkadian Cyrus's conquest of Babylon in 539 BCE. It includes more than forty lines, most of them in good condition. In the cylinder, Cyrus boasts of restoring sanctuaries and doing so in the name of the Babylonian god Marduk, which parallels Cyrus's portrait and role in Ezra 1:1–4. Most scholars today, however, understand the decree in Ezra 1 as the work of a Judean author, possibly reworking genuine sources, including Ezra 6:2–5. The decree's chief historical value lies not in proving that Cyrus issued this decree but in the way it discloses the book's agenda.

Ezra 1, like Isa 45:1–7, presents Cyrus as commissioned by Israel's God to liberate Israel and secure its well-being, a sure sign of God's care for Israel. The exilic prophet calls Cyrus "God's anointed" (Isa 45:1), elsewhere casting Cyrus as Jerusalem's builder. God

> says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd,
> and he shall carry out all my purpose";
> and . . . says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt,"
> and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid" (Isa 44:28, NRSV).

This prophecy corresponds well to EN's interpretation of the decree as extending beyond the temple to Jerusalem as a whole (see Eskenazi 1988a, and Notes at Ezra 6:14).

Early Greek sources, like biblical ones, view Cyrus favorably, albeit for different reasons. Herodotus in his *Histories* depicts Cyrus as a wise, conscientious ruler, a portrait all the more intriguing given the enmity and wars between Persia and Greece in the fifth century BCE. Herodotus clothes Cyrus's birth and childhood in legendary accounts normally attached to heroes in ancient civilizations. He portrays Cyrus's reign as marked by generosity, as when he grants amnesty to his enemy, Croesus, king of Sardis (*Hist.* I.86–90).

Although the historicity of Herodotus's account of Cyrus's early life cannot be taken literally (see, e.g., Briant 2002), the stories show that Cyrus was highly esteemed by Greek historians. See also Xenophon (ca. 430–354 BCE), whose work *Kyropaideia* presents Cyrus as the ideal ruler.

The Cyrus Cylinder likewise lauds Cyrus as a beloved king, commissioned by the Babylonian god Marduk to liberate the Babylonians. It promotes Cyrus as the ideal ruler, beloved by God and by his subject peoples. As Kuhrt (1983, 84) notes, "Cyrus has been hailed as one of the world's greatest liberators and humanitarians." Modern readers, no less than ancient ones, continue to perpetuate the image of a benevolent, tolerant, and able king. (The appropriation of the name David Koresh, the Hebrew version of Cyrus's name, by a modern cult leader with messianic aspirations is another, macabre, example of the persistent influence of the memory of Cyrus. David Koresh died with his followers in Waco, Texas, in 1993.)

But as Kuhrt (1983, 92–94) also observes, the persistent perception of a tolerant Persian imperial rule, kinder than the Assyrian yoke, is tendentious, promoted by ancient political propaganda. Like other empires, Cyrus's was governed by political and economic priorities, at best masked by the kind of devoted service to God that Ezra 1:1–4 also expresses. Still, Persian policies did enable different nationalities to pursue their traditions when not in conflict with the empire's interests.

CYRUS'S DECREE

Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1 has been extensively mined in an attempt to determine its historicity, reliability, and actual intent. Extrabiblical records do not preserve a copy of this decree. Ezra 6:3–5 reproduces an Aramaic version that differs in genre (being a memorandum) and detail (for a comparison between Ezra 1:2–4 and 6:3–5, see NOTES at Ezra 6:3–5 below).

There is a consensus that the Persian court authorized the building of the temple in Jerusalem. But how is Ezra 1:2–4 related to such authorization? Those who discredit the decree's reliability point to features unlikely in an authentic decree from a Persian ruler: the inaccurate title of Cyrus as Persian king; Cyrus's references to YHWH, Israel's distinctive God; Cyrus's reference to himself as YHWH's appointee; the difference between the decree and the memorandum in Ezra 6:3–5; the improbable permission to transfer funds from the empire to Judah; and the Hebrew (rather than Aramaic) language of the decree.

These and other objections have been scrutinized by Bickerman (1946, 254–75), Tadmor (1968), Bedford (2001), and Grabbe (2006) among others. Bickerman concludes that stylistic and ideological features of the decree, so compatible with that era's royal communications, indicate that it could have been issued by Cyrus. Extrabiblical decrees by Achaemenid rulers show similar traits. In particular, the Cyrus Cylinder preserves a proclamation by Cyrus that functions like Ezra 1:2–4 and resembles it (Bickerman 1946). Porten (1979) draws attention to additional stylistic features in support of the authenticity of the decree. Grabbe (2006, 563), on the other hand, ranks Cyrus's decree as the least authentic among the highly questionable royal documents in EN.

Ezra 6:3–5 contributes to the debates. That Aramaic document, introduced as a memorandum from King Cyrus, authorizes the building of the temple. It includes financial provisions for the temple and mandates the restoration of the plundered temple vessels. Most scholars regard it as a source for Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:2–4. Bedford (2001) sums up the three dominant positions on the authenticity of both documents:

1. The decree in Ezra 1 is either the free creation of EN or is based on information derived from the Aramaic sources. This is the dominant position held by (among others) Meyer (1896, 46–54), Schaeder (1930, 28–29), and Mowinckel (1964a, 8), and more recently by Blenkinsopp (1988, 74), Japhet (1991b, 210–11), and Briend (1996).
2. Both documents are authentic or reliable; their differences result from differing purposes and genres. This position seems to go back to Nikel (1900, 33–37; cited by Bedford 2001, 113 n. 52) and was held also by Bickerman (1946), Tadmor (1964), Clines (1984, 36), Hensley (1977, 211–16, 219–21), and Williamson (1985, 3–15).
3. Neither is original; both are fabrications. This position goes back to Wellhausen (1895) and Torrey (1896, 5–12). It is followed today by Grabbe (1998, 126–28, 131) and Becking (2018, 24–25), who consider the decree to be propaganda composed by EN's author. (For details about these theories, see Bedford 2001, 111–57, esp. 113, as well as NOTES and COMMENTS at Ezra 6:1–12.)

Fried (2015a, 62–66) regards the decree and Ezra 1–6 as a whole as part of a building inscription, basing her analysis on Hurowitz (1992), who describes texts and rituals of ANE temple building. Fried argues that God's name, YHWH, and other suspect

features "are entirely appropriate . . . in a building inscription for a Jerusalem temple. There is no need for building inscriptions of local temples to use the language or idioms of the Achaemenid bureaucracy" (Fried 2004, 163). Blenkinsopp (1987) calls attention to the inscription of Udjahorresnet, an Egyptian who records his commission from Cambyses and Darius I, exemplifying local (Egyptian) culture and language in an inscription that credits the Persian kings.

The Cyrus Cylinder continues to be a major source for assessing Ezra 1:1–4. In it Cyrus declares that "the cities on the other side of the Tigris, whose dwelling-place had [of o]ld fallen into ruin—the gods who dwelt there I returned to their home and let them move into an eternal dwelling. All their people I collected and brought them back to their homes" (lines 31–32; Kuhrt 2007, 72). Cyrus also claims he restored the gods of Sumer and Akkad "at the order of Marduk" (ibid., lines 33–35).

Since the cylinder portrays Cyrus as a special envoy of the Babylonians' god (not the Persians'), it is to be expected that his message to Judeans would portray him as an instrument of their God. Additionally, since the Cyrus Cylinder about Babylon is in Akkadian, the language of Babylonia, the use of Hebrew, not Persian or Aramaic (the common administrative language of the Persian Empire), is also consistent, given a message about Judah. It is likewise consistent that an Aramaic version would be stored in Persian archives (hence Ezra 6:3–5 as a copy of such an archival memorandum).

Bickerman (1946) effectively explains all the differences between the decree and the memorandum by reference to the genre. Each document conforms to the scribal and royal conventions of the time. Bickerman also demonstrates that all the features in the decree in Ezra 1:2–4 can be found in comparable ANE and classical texts and practices. For Bickerman, this counts as proof that the decree can hardly be "a Jewish invention," as has been claimed (ibid., 268).

But is it proof? Bickerman succeeds in demonstrating that whoever wrote Ezra 1 was well versed in contemporary conventions. Most scholars today, however, identify a Judean hand in formulating the decree and continue to debate the extent to which this version represents an actual imperial authorization (see Bedford 2001, 111–57, esp. 113).

What Bickerman does not do, however, is examine how effectively the decree works as an introduction to EN. Every detail in the decree encapsulates the agenda of EN as a whole. The decree confirms that Jerusalem is YHWH's chosen place according to both God and the Persian king. It introduces two of EN's underlying themes: (1) the centrality of documents and (2) the role of the people. Also, by referring to "house" (not "temple"), the decree prepares the ground for the third theme: the expanded "house of YHWH" as including more than the temple.

The focus on the people is particularly striking. While the decree conforms (according to Bickerman) to heraldic messages, its emphases go beyond basic requirements. It thereby highlights one of EN's distinctive features. EN more than any other biblical book focuses on the community as chief human actor, emphasizing the people's initiative and participation throughout. The long lists that frame the reconstruction of Judean life in the land (Ezra 2 // Neh 7) reiterate the message. The book also repeatedly raises the question first posed in Ezra 1:3: Who is to count as God's people?

Finally, in line with the accommodation that EN seeks to implement, the decree shows that Persian imperial rule is compatible with Judean loyalty to Israel's own traditions and God. The close fit between the decree and the rest of EN should not surprise,

given Williamson's (1983) compositional theory that Ezra 1–6 is the latest major section of EN (see further the Comments about the memorandum under "King Darius's Supportive Response" [6:1–12]).

The Importance of Jerusalem

Ezra 1 insists from the beginning on linking YHWH's house with Jerusalem and Judah. A polemic against other groups with rival temples seems to be at work. The existence of a Judean temple to YHW at Elephantine, Egypt, in the fifth century BCE is well documented. Blenkinsopp (2003) and Knauf (2006) make the case also for Bethel as another contemporaneous temple with continuous cult. Ezra 8:18 hints at a possibility of a cultic center in Babylonia (see Casiphia in Ezra 8:18 and the Comments at Ezra 8:15–20). The most likely target of such polemic, however, is Samaria. Evidence suggests that Samaria had a Persian-period temple (Magen 2000; Stern and Magen 2002; Knoppers 2006, 279; Dušek 2014, 111–33). Competition between Jerusalem and Samaria goes back to preexilic texts; it hovers over the rest of EN, where opposition from Samaria features heavily (see, e.g., at Ezra 4:10). The emphasis on Jerusalem gains significance also in light of the relationship of Jerusalem to Benjamin (see Notes at Ezra 1:5).

Biblical texts and archaeological data concur that Jerusalem was left desolate after the Babylonian assault (see, e.g., Jer 52; Neh 1:3, 7:4; and Faust 2003, 2007; Finkelstein 2008; Lipschits 2005). It was replaced for administrative purposes by Mizpah and Ramat Rahel and was slow to regain its former position (or size), remaining sparsely populated and poor even at the end of the Persian period. Although archaeological evidence contradicts EN's depiction of Jerusalem's dramatic restoration in response to God and Cyrus, EN nonetheless envisions Jerusalem as the unique abode of Israel's God. It places the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple at the center of its narrative. As for Jerusalem's political status, Alt (1953) had argued that Judah became a distinct province only under Nehemiah, a theory followed by a number of twentieth-century scholars. Williamson effectively challenges such a late date for Judah's distinctive political status. Recent archaeological findings support the conclusion that Judah remained distinct after the Babylonian destruction and had its own governors (see Williamson 1985, 12; 1988b; see also Vanderhooft 2003, and further Notes at Ezra 1:8).

God of Israel and Jerusalem

There are two ways to translate and understand the reference to God in Ezra 1:3. One way is to read the modifier *asher* ("that is") as referring to the house, which is to be in Jerusalem. Thus the medieval Jewish commentators Pseudo Rashi and Pseudo Ibn Ezra regard the phrase "that is in Jerusalem" as "a description of the location of the Temple, not of God, whose Presence is universal. . . . The intervening phrase . . . *He is the God,* was interjected parenthetically by Cyrus as a declaration of his belief in the supremacy of the God of Israel: 'He is the God!'" (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 66–67). Fried (2015a, 52) translates "the temple of Yhwh the god of Israel (He is God) which is in Jerusalem" (noting that the word "temple" is not in the Hebrew).

More common interpretations of the phrase associate the God of Israel specifically with Jerusalem; thus the NRSV: "the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem." Relating God to a place (here, Jerusalem) makes good sense in the message

of a pagan, such as Cyrus, for whom gods are explicitly associated with specific locales. Similar links between God and place appear in Elephantine (see, e.g., *TAD* A 4.7.5–6 // Cowley 30; *TAD* B 3.3.2 // Kraeling 2; *TAD* B 3.5.2 // Kraeling 4).

In light of postexilic polemics, an emphasis on Jerusalem as God's unique habitation may be historically consequential in the competition between Jerusalem and other existing cult centers, especially Samaria. Political and economic considerations may also underlie this emphasis (e.g., tax breaks, according to Ezra 7:24). On the use of "the God of Israel" and its political associations, see Stahl 2021 and Notes at Ezra 1:3.

who is to support the building?

Grammar alone fails to resolve whether "the one who remains" (Heb. *hanniš'ār;* Ezra 1:4) refers to whoever stays in Babylon or to whoever returns. The phrase in Hag 2:3 refers to those now dwelling in the land of Israel, without any implication that they had been in exile.

Josephus, who paraphrases rather than reproduces Cyrus's decree, has Cyrus explicitly state that neighboring governors and satraps were to contribute (*Ant.* XI.i.2). Pseudo Rashi and Pseudo Ibn Ezra identify "anyone who remains" with poor Judeans who cannot afford to return and who therefore must be assisted by neighbors in order to go.

Commenting on v. 4, Batten (1913, 59–60) observes: "The implication of the text is that the Babylonian neighbors of the returning Jews were called upon for contributions. *All that survive* covers the whole body of Jews in Babylonia, and as they are to be *supported* by *the men of his place* these can be no other than the Babylonians." For Blenkinsopp (1988, 76), "remnant" carries "theological resonance identifying the Babylonian *gôlâ* as the prophetic remnant" (cf. 1 Chr 13:2; 2 Chr 30:6, 34:21). Blenkinsopp also detects here an allusion to the exodus theme, with its despoiling of the Egyptians (ibid., 75–76).

Williamson (1985), who also detects the exodus motif in EN, locates this theme of despoiling at a later point and reads here a reference to those Judeans who remain in Babylonia but who nevertheless must support the ones going up to Jerusalem. Williamson denies a technical and theological meaning here, especially since the word never has this theological meaning when it stands alone (ibid., 14).

Furthermore, translating the rest of the verse as "who belong to any of the places where he is living," Williamson (1985, 15) adds: "This phrase does no more than make explicit (albeit by means of a rather involved construction, not unparalleled in legal documents) that each 'colony' of Jews should support any from their own group who might be undertaking the return." Hausmann (1987, 38), in her massive study of the term "remnant," notes that EN shows no interest in those who remain in Babylonia and likely refers to survivors who return to Judah.

Since grammar, awkward in either case, is amenable to a number of interpretations, the verse may intend a double meaning. EN emphasizes support for the return by both Judeans and gentiles. Each subsequent movement from exile to Jerusalem (Ezra 2–6, 7–10; Neh 1–7) includes support by the foreign king and hence demonstrates that the gentiles of the place also subsidized the immigrants. At the same time, EN, like other postexilic texts, is witness to a new and significant phenomenon: a Judean diaspora voluntarily dwelling away from the land but supporting Jerusalem's temple. EN recognizes

those in diaspora as Israel (see, e.g., Ezra 8:25) but concentrates only on those who go up to Judah (note also Zech 6:9–11, where diaspora brings gifts to Jerusalem).

B. The People's Response (1:5–6)

1 [5]And the paternal heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with everyone whose spirit God has roused, arose to go up to build the house of YHWH that is in Jerusalem. [6]And all those around them strengthened their hands with silver vessels, with gold, with goods and with livestock and with choice gifts apart from all that was freely offered.

Introduction

Ezra 1:1–4 has set the agenda for the entire book: to build YHWH's house in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:5–6 confirms that the people complied. Ezra 2–Nehemiah 7 describes in detail how the people built that house of YHWH in three stages. Nehemiah 8–13 describes the celebrations that ensued.

Notes

1:5. *And the paternal heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with everyone whose spirit God has roused, arose to go up to build the house of YHWH that is in Jerusalem.* EN depicts a prompt response to the call. The verses constitute a proleptic summary, or "flash forward," summing up what will subsequently unfold as three major stages of rebuilding (extending from Ezra 2 to Neh 7). Parallels between these two verses and Cyrus's decree highlight full compliance with the decree, but they communicate something else as well: God awakened, "roused," Cyrus to authorize going up to Jerusalem; God likewise awakened, "roused," the people to go to Jerusalem (note the repetition of "roused" in 1:1 and 1:5). Although the people's actions correspond to Cyrus's instructions, they nevertheless get their marching orders from God. Josephus adds: "But many remained in Babylon, being unwilling to leave their possessions" (*Ant.* XI.i.3).

paternal heads. Heb. *rāʾšê hāʾābhôt,* lit. "heads of fathers." The LXX has *archontes tōn patriōn.* Both Hebrew and Greek indicate male heads of households, denoting a basic socioeconomic unit in the postexilic period. The expression *rāʾšê ʾābhôt* is distinctive to EN (twelve times) and Chronicles (twenty-three times), with only five other occurrences in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. We cannot determine the sizes of households.

Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites. The verse emphasizes a response by the entire community. However, only three tribes—Judah, Benjamin, and Levi (of which priests are a privileged subset)—provide continuity in EN (Japhet 1982, 97–98). The northern tribes of Israel are excluded (Fried 2015a, 75). As for the order of participants, EN often privileges laypeople over cult personnel by listing them first, as here (see also, e.g., the lists in Ezra 2 // Neh 7).

Tribal identification is not common in EN and is not consistently mentioned. The general grouping is usually Israel (including both Judah and Benjamin), priests, and Levites, as in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 (but see Ezra 4:1, 10:9, and Neh 11, where Benjamin is again singled out). Each of these cases expresses unity among two representatives of Jacob's line: children of Leah (Judah) and Rachel (Benjamin), alluding as

well to the house of Saul (Benjamin) and the house of David (Judah). EN emphasizes the unity of Judah and Benjamin.

Judah. Heb. *yĕhûdâ.* EN uses "Judah" for the tribe and the province. First Esdras adds "the tribe of Judah" (1 Esd 2:8). On "Judah," see also Notes at Ezra 1:2.

Benjamin. Like Judah, the name is used interchangeably for the tribe and the territory, this one adjacent to what used to be Judah's northern boundary. Benjamin, named after Rachel's youngest son in Genesis, gradually united with Judah and eventually was absorbed into it. It is associated with troublesome events in Judges 19–21 but also is the tribe to which King Saul belonged. Esther 2:5 gives the impression that Mordecai also hailed from this tribe. The identity of this tribe is still distinctive in the first century CE, when the apostle Paul describes himself as "of the tribe of Benjamin" (Phil 3:5). The mention here is striking, given that Benjamin was not exiled by the Babylonians (see the Comments below).

priests. Priests in the Bible constitute a select group from the tribe of Levi who uniquely trace their origin to Aaron (see Ezra 7:1–6). Priests are more prominent in EN and the postexilic era than in narratives and history of the monarchic period. According to Exodus 28, God granted Aaron's family a unique position as priests (see also Num 25:10–13). Priests were placed in charge of sacrifices and matters concerning purity. Leviticus in particular delineates their special functions. The demise of Judah's monarchy and the new significance of the temple gave the priesthood unprecedented power. The exiles' exposure to grand temple cities in Babylonia possibly contributed to the enhancement of priests' status and responsibilities. Yet a critical reading of EN discloses a commitment by Ezra and Nehemiah to curtail priestly monopoly. Tactics include the emphasis on the book of the *torah* as a superior source of authority and the enfranchising of Levites and the rest of the people (for more on priests, see Rooke 2000; Hunt 2006; Leuchter and Hutton 2011).

the Levites. The term relates to "accompanying." Levites were cult officials, lower than priests, and especially prominent in Numbers, EN, and Chronicles. While the functions of priests in ancient sanctuaries are well understood and largely consistent across cultures, those of the Levites in Israel are not so clear.

Introducing Levites as descendants of Jacob and Leah's third son, the Bible typically differentiates them from priests, the descendants of Levi specifically from the line of Aaron (but see "the Levitical priests" in, e.g., Deut 17:9). The Levites' roles and their actual relations in history remain opaque. Leviticus essentially ignores them. In Numbers, however, they are uniquely dedicated to the service of God and the priests (Num 8:5–19) and given to the Aaronide priests in lieu of Israel's firstborn (Num 8:10–19, 18:1–6). Levites in Numbers primarily care for the tabernacle and its furnishings. According to Numbers 35, they were to dwell throughout the tribes in special towns apportioned to them. Deuteronomy, on the other hand, entrusts the "Levitical priests" with cultic functions that seem to collapse the distinction between priests and Levites. But tithing laws and other privileges differentiate between priests and Levites in Deuteronomy.

Chronicles places Levites in a prominent position but subordinate to priests. In EN they work alongside the priests and also have liturgical roles, supervising work on the temple, leading in prayer, singing, and teaching (e.g., Ezra 3, Neh 9). Both Ezra and Nehemiah undertake special measures to ensure the Levites' position and in some places put them on par with priests (see, e.g., Ezra 8:15–30).

EN may reflect a time of transition. Since references to Levites are most prominent in lists that are of heterogeneous origin, a history for these two groups remains unclear, despite Schaper's (2000) attempt to resolve uncertainties (see, e.g., Williamson's [2003] critique). EN, however, seems to enfranchise Levites as a counterforce to priestly monopoly (on Levites, see further Nurmela 1998; Knoppers 1999; Leuchter and Hutton 2011).

with everyone whose spirit God has roused. Just as God awakened or roused Cyrus's spirit in Ezra 1:1, so God rouses the spirit of those who rebuild (note the exact parallel). Everything that unfolds in EN is the outcome of this double "rousing" or inspiration. This is one of very few instances in EN where the narrator goes behind the scenes, as it were, conveying supernatural knowledge about God's activities in the world. Other rare examples are at Ezra 6:22 and 7:6.

with. Heb. *lĕkhōl,* lit. "to all," an expression that indicates generalization. See, for example, Gen 23:10; 1 Chr 13:1. The LXX simply uses *pantōn,* "of all."

arose to go up to build the house of YHWH that is in Jerusalem. The people's action directly and precisely corresponds to Cyrus's decree, but at the prompting of God, not of Cyrus.

1:6. *And all those around them strengthened their hands.* Cyrus's decree had prescribed support for those going up (albeit in an obscure fashion). The present verse assures the reader that these instructions were fulfilled. The linguistic ambiguity of Ezra 1:4 is resolved by the more general term that suggests support by all neighbors, Judeans and non-Judeans alike.

silver vessels, with gold, with goods and with livestock. Just as Cyrus demanded (Ezra 1:4), so the people did, thanks to God's influence. They do even more. "Vessels" do not appear in Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:1–4. But see 1:7–11 and the return of the temple's vessels.

choice gifts. Heb. *migdānôt,* a rare term. The LXX has *xeniois.* These imply that the contributions even exceeded requirements.

apart from all that was freely offered. Emphasis on voluntary, generous contributions typifies accounts of the building of the tabernacle (see Exod 25:2; 35:21, 29). The Masoretic notations mark this verse as the end of the first unit of the book. Having summed up the goal and compliance with it, namely, building God's house in Jerusalem, EN henceforth describes how the community accomplished the task (Ezra 2:1–Neh 7:72 [ET 73]) and celebrated its completion (Neh 8–13).

Comments

Ezra 1:5–6 depicts the people's inspired determination to rebuild YHWH's house. No individual leaders are named. Instead, the focus is on households belonging to four main groups (Ezra 1:5). Households constitute the main socioeconomic unit in the Bible, usually designated as *bêt ʾābh* ("the father's house") or *bêt ʾābhôt* ("the fathers' house"). The relationship between these two categories has been subject to debate. Japhet (2019, 60) notes that *ʾābhôt* replaces *bêt ʾābh* or *bêt ʾābhôt* of earlier texts but that the transition is too imprecise to help date material. Fried (2015a, 71–74) observes that *bêt ʾābh* is typically used when a specific family is in view. In any case, "family" would refer to people related biologically or through marriage, and "household" would include as well anyone sharing the same residence (see, e.g., Ackerman 2008, 127–30).

EN implies that the title "paternal heads" refers to representatives with leadership positions. In Ezra 2:68 // Neh 7:70 they contribute much gold and silver to the project; in Neh 8:13 they represent the people; in Neh 12:12 they represent priestly families. Unfortunately, the composition and size of the units are not perceptible. The customary yardstick for community structure in the Bible is Josh 7:14, which identifies units in descending order and size as the tribe (*šēbheṭ*), the family (*mišpāḥâ*), the household (*bayit*), and the individual (*gebher*). Gelb (1979), writing about Babylonia, notes that, at least conceptually, we may keep in mind two different structures: kinship (family grouping) and household (residential grouping). The same applies to Judah. Gelb also notes that, linguistically, terms for these groupings possess rich connotations and technical meanings in several ancient languages. But he acknowledges that it is difficult to separate the familial from the residential (ibid., 1–2). It is also difficult to determine the size and hierarchies within each unit in the Bible and in Judah (see further Collins in Perdue et al. 1997, 104–62, esp. 104–6; and Blenkinsopp in Perdue et al. 1997, 48–103, esp. 85–92).

Weinberg (1992b) proposed a specific social and economic structure for the postexilic era, shaped after the model of *Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde* (Citizen-Temple Community) in which authorities allocated land to families in conjunction with the temple and an integrated communal organization. Weinberg's overarching conceptualization (especially about the pattern of shared ownership of land beyond the family) no longer holds sway. But his analysis, though it has not settled the issues, has illumined the complexity of the subject of family and household structures in the Bible and Judean society.

Archaeology helps but a little. The population of Judah was primarily rural, and surviving domestic buildings are few (Faust 2012, 233–42; and 2018; Fried 2015a, 71–74; Lipschits 2006; E. Stern 1982). It is usually not possible to determine the size of villages, let alone individual farmsteads.

Faust (2018, 34–59), however, calls attention to what may be a growing number of large estates in Persian-period Judah. In addition, Gadot (2015) has identified about twenty-four Persian-period agricultural installations in the Valley of the Kings adjacent to Jerusalem, some capable of large-scale production, judging by the size of the facilities and the jars for either wine or oil. The clustering of certain houses around facilities (rather than the more conventional courtyards) suggests that the group worked together to produce at more than subsistence level. Although the archaeology of these sites cannot provide information about the social or kinship patterns of their inhabitants, there may be some correlation between such settlement patterns and groups that designated themselves as *ʾābhôt* in EN.

EN emphatically defines Judah and Benjamin together as postexilic Israel (see Ezra 4:1, 10:9; Neh 11). Biblical sources and archaeology concur that Benjamin did not rebel against Babylon when Judah's King Zedekiah did and therefore did not suffer the same devastation as Jerusalem and Judah. Its population does not appear to have been exiled (see, e.g., Jer 37:12 and Faust 2012, esp. 209–31). The town of Mizpah in Benjamin became the new administrative center with the fall of Jerusalem. Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians appointed over Benjamin and Judah, lived in Mizpah (2 Kgs 25:22–26), where survivors (including Jeremiah) went after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 40:6). The sanctuary of Bethel in Benjamin possibly provided continuity after the demise of the temple in Jerusalem (see Blenkinsopp 2003 and Knauf 2006 on Bethel).

The restoration of Jerusalem as the center of the restored community may have challenged the vested interests of those in Benjamin. Archaeology confirms that Mizpah's prominence declined with the rise of Jerusalem. Other sites as well show dwindling population in Benjamin during the Persian period after growth in the Neo-Babylonian period (see, e.g., Edelman 2005; Faust 2012; and Lipschits 2005). EN's emphasis on Benjamin's participation (here and in Ezra 4:1; 10:9, 32; Neh 3:23, 11:36) may aim to show that despite possible competition, Benjamin wholly supported a renewed Jerusalem. The Benjaminites did not necessarily go up from Babylon but rather from Benjamin (nothing in Cyrus's decree refers specifically to a return from Babylon). But more significantly, the emphasis on Benjamin may also stem from the need to ensure that Benjamin remains part of the province of Judah (on Benjamin, see also Krause, Sergi, and Weingart 2020).

Ezra 1:5–6 resolves the linguistic ambiguity of 1:4 by claiming support for the reconstruction from all neighbors, Judeans and non-Judeans alike. Williamson (1985, 16) highlights the exodus motif of "spoiling the Egyptian" as a possible allusion (see also Gunneweg 1985, 46). Hurowitz (1992, 208–10) notes some allusions to Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian building accounts; Achaemenid inscriptions such as those of Darius refer to wide-ranging sources of support for his projects. Language about largesse in voluntary contributions is thus a common feature in accounts of temple building (Fried 2015a, 77).

Yet more is at work here. Writing about the construction of identity, Knoppers (2015) observes that from the perspective of EN, diaspora has become an acceptable way of life. Exclusivity in EN (see Notes at Ezra 4:1–3) is coupled with a new form of inclusivity. Israel now encompasses those outside the land who commit themselves to support God's house in Jerusalem. Knoppers (2009a, 171) highlights that EN "authorizes a role both for Judeans residing in the Diaspora and for diasporic Judeans residing in Yehud to play in the ongoing development of the Israelite people." This pattern, with diaspora contributing to the homeland, will persist for millennia.

EN throughout emphasizes that Judah's renewal benefits from initiative and resources in the diaspora. While it highlights the membership in Judah of the *gôlâ,* Benjamin, and Levi (including priests) as the legitimate remnant of Israel, it expands affiliation by recognizing those still outside the land as also "Israel." This is evident in Ezra 8:25, which reckons gifts from those in diaspora as gifts from the people of Israel.

Gifts for the temple cult make possible participation in worship from a distance. This can extend not only to diaspora but also to those who live in the land yet far from Jerusalem (neither Cyrus's decree nor the response to it in Ezra 1:5–6 refers specifically to those in exile). Loyalty to the temple in Jerusalem becomes a touchstone regardless of one's geographical location.

C. The Reclamation of the Temple Vessels (1:7–11)

1 [7]And the king, Cyrus, took out the vessels of the house of YHWH that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out from Jerusalem and had placed in the house of his gods. [8]And Cyrus, king of Persia, took them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the leader of Judah. [9]And these are their numbers: gold dishes: 30; silver dishes: 1,000; knives: 29. [10]Gold bowls: 30; second silver bowls:

410; other vessels: 1,000. [11]All vessels of gold and silver, 5,400. All did Sheshbazzar bring up with the going up of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Introduction and Structure

The reversal of devastation and exile begins with the reclamation of the plundered temple vessels. EN's language echoes the exodus from Egypt. The short list of itemized vessels indicates that a formal transaction took place, restoring the temple vessels from Babylonian and Persian hands to Judean hands. But the nature of the vessels, their numbers, and their ultimate fate remain uncertain.

While Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:2–4 says nothing about the vessels, EN nevertheless mentions three times that Cyrus transferred the vessels to the hands of a Judean leader named Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:7–11, 5:14–15, 6:3–5).

These vessels, Ackroyd (1972) suggests, function in EN as a symbol of continuity; yet the vessels do not resemble those taken from the temple in 2 Kgs 25:14–15. Fried (2015a, 28–29) regards their return as tantamount to the return of the gods in the ANE, yet there is no mention of these vessels ever reaching the temple. Unfamiliar terms and inconsistent numbers add to the problems with assessing the list. Scholarly research concentrates on three central issues: (1) the actual history of the vessels and their fate, (2) the roles of the vessels in EN and other traditions, and (3) the identity and role of Sheshbazzar. Despite many suggestive interpretations, no entirely satisfactory answers have emerged (see the Comments below).

The structure of Ezra 1:7–11 is as follows:

1. The retrieval and transfer of the temple vessels (1:7–8)
2. The list of vessels (1:9–10)
3. Conclusion: The return of the vessels and exiles (1:11)

Notes

1:7. *And the king, Cyrus, took out the vessels of the house of YHWH.* EN highlights the king's role in the transfer (as the NRSV states, "King Cyrus himself"). It thereby underscores the high status of the vessels and their restoration, as well as Cyrus's personal concern for their welfare.

the vessels of the house of YHWH that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out from Jerusalem. According to 2 Kings, Nebuchadnezzar carried with the first exile in 597 BCE "all the treasures of the House of YHWH and of the palace, and broke up all the gold objects in the Hall of YHWH which Solomon, king of Israel, had made, as YHWH had foretold" (2 Kgs 24:13). Second Kings 25:13–15 and Jer 52:17–23 describe additional vessels and temple objects taken in the second exile (587/586 BCE).

Jeremiah 27:16–28:9 also reports that some vessels were carted off to Babylon with the first deportation (as per 2 Kgs 24). The prophet Hananiah promises their imminent return as the sign of release from the Babylonian yoke (Jer 28:2–4). Jeremiah agrees with the vessels' symbolism as a sign of God's promise but rejects hopes about immediate restoration. According to Jeremiah, the temple vessels that survived the first attack will soon be taken as well (Jer 27:18–22).

Jeremiah 27:16–29 highlights the centrality of the vessels as proof of restoration: "concerning the vessels which are left in the house of YHWH, and the house of the

king, and in Jerusalem: 'They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I give attention to them [a form of *p.q.d.*]—a declaration of YHWH. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place'" (Jer 27:22).

The invocation of Jeremiah's words in Ezra 1:1 possibly alludes to this message, especially given the use of *p.q.d.* in Jeremiah here and in Ezra 1:1. However, the LXX omits mention of the return of the vessels in Jer 27:22, thus suggesting that the theme is relatively late.

the vessels. First Esdras 2:10 and throughout this section adds "holy" to "vessels."

Nebuchadnezzar. Heb. *nĕbûkhadneṣar.* The Akkadian *Nabû-kudurri-uṣur* means "O god Nabu, preserve/defend my offspring." The name may also mean "Oh [god] Nabu, protect the boundary" (Wiseman 1985, 3). King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon (605–562 BCE), a member of the Chaldean dynasty, brought the city and the Neo-Babylonian Empire to the heights of their power. The Babylonian Chronicles confirm his successful political and military campaigns in the empire's western region. His achievements in Babylon remain visible in archaeological remains such as the Ishtar Gate. According to later sources, the famed "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" that he built to please his wife were one of the "Seven Wonders of the World."

In 2 Kings 24–25, Jeremiah 39 (esp. vv. 5–12) and 52 and 2 Chronicles 36, Nebuchadnezzar ("Nebuchadrezzar" in, e.g., Jer 52:4) is responsible for the Bible's watershed crisis: the destruction of the temple and the Babylonian exile. Biblical and extrabiblical sources claim that he besieged Jerusalem in 597 BCE and exiled Judah's King Jehoiachin and other elite members to Babylonia (at least ten thousand; so 2 Kgs 24:14, 16). In 587/586 he destroyed the temple and Jerusalem and took many others (832 people according to Jer 52:29) to Babylonia.

The spelling "Nebuchadrezzar" (common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel) is closer to the Babylonian form of the name. While the form in EN may indicate a corruption, writing the name with "n," as in Ezra 1:7, is attested in an Aramaic tablet from Nebuchadnezzar's own time (Wiseman 1985, 2).

had taken out. The repetition here highlights the reversal of Nebuchadnezzar's pillaging and the exodus motif.

and had placed in the house of his gods. Second Chronicles 36:7 specifies that Nebuchadnezzar "put them in his *bayit* [palace? temple?] in Babylon." Daniel 1:2 preserves a similar tradition (see also 1 Esd 1:41). Confiscating sacred, expensive vessels undoubtedly served in part as a theological statement, demonstrating the superiority of the gods of the victors. Capturing representations of defeated peoples' gods "intended to underline to the devotees the inability of their gods to save" (Williamson 1985, 16). Restoring these objects, then, marks the resumption of worship. The Cyrus Cylinder specifies that Cyrus restored the sacred images to various Mesopotamian temples (*ANET* 316, lines 31–35; Kuhrt 2007, 72). In biblical Israel, the vessels and the ark became visible sacred symbols, but the ark seems to have vanished (only 2 Macc 2:4–5 preserves a tradition that it survived the destruction of the temple).

The reference to placing the vessels in Nebuchadnezzar's temple serves three important functions. First, it demonstrates the veneration granted these vessels. Second, it counters the view that they had been destroyed (2 Kgs 24:13). Third, it reflects "efficacy of the temple vessels as associated symbols of the divine power and presence," through which "the breach of the exilic age is healed" (Ackroyd 1972, 179).

the house of his gods. Second Kings implies that the vessels ended up in the king's palace, but EN insists on the temple in Babylon. First Esdras 2:10 specifies "his idols." The Heb. *ʾĕlōhāyw* could mean "god" or "gods"; the LXX prefers the singular. The chief Babylonian god was Marduk. Like other ancient cities, Babylon housed temples of several gods, each typically dedicated to a single divinity.

1:8. *And Cyrus, king of Persia, took them out.* Emphasis on Cyrus's personal care is coupled with the verb "took out," which alludes again (as in Ezra 1:7) to the exodus (on the exodus motif in EN, see Williamson 1985, 19).

Mithredath. A common Persian name, meaning "gift of [the god] Mithra." This official does not appear in the other accounts about the vessels in EN. He needs to be differentiated from Mithredath in Ezra 4:7. In Herodotus (*Hist.* I.110), a different Mithredath is the herdsman who, with his wife, rescues baby Cyrus.

treasurer. Heb. *gizbār,* LXX *gasbarēnou,* a transliteration of this Persian loan word. Although rare in the Bible (only here and in an Aramaic form in Ezra 7:21), forms of this word are common in the Persepolis rationing tablets for people supervising royal possessions and distributing provisions (see, e.g., Cameron 1948, 33).

counted them out. Emphasis falls on proper transfer. Compare Ezra 8:24, where vessels are delivered carefully to Jerusalem's cult personnel.

Sheshbazzar the leader of Judah. Heb. *šēšbaṣṣar hannāśîʾ lîhûdâ;* LXX *sasabasar archonti tou Iouda.* Sheshbazzar's identity and function remain tantalizingly in question. The name is Babylonian, meaning "may Sassu [the sun-god] protect the father" (so Berger 1971). He appears without a patronym and is mentioned only in EN. Ezra 1:11 reports that he brought up the vessels to Jerusalem. The Aramaic Ezra 5:13–16 identifies him as "governor," *peḥâ,* and states that he both received the temple vessels and laid the temple's foundations.

Babylonian records indicate that King Cyrus left leading Babylonians in their positions after his conquest of Babylon (Jursa 2007, 78–79); the same could be expected for Judeans. Sheshbazzar, then, may have been a Judean leader of the exilic community. Fried (2015a, 82) and Silverman and Waerzeggers (2015, 308–21) consider him a Babylonian. Japhet (1982, 96) thinks he was a Judean but concludes that it cannot be determined whether he was a Judean with a Babylonian name (as was Zerubbabel; see Ezra 2:2) or a foreigner (Japhet 2019, 62). There is no other information about him, but his title suggests that EN regards him as a Judean (see "the leader" and Comments below).

Problems increase because EN inconsistently credits both Sheshbazzar (Ezra 5:16) and Zerubbabel (3:8–13) with laying the temple foundations (Haggai and Zechariah credit Zerubbabel). These difficulties gave rise to three main theories about Sheshbazzar: (1) Sheshbazzar is another name for Shenazzar, a Davidic descendant in 1 Chr 3:18; (2) Sheshbazzar is another name for Zerubbabel; and (3) the texts refer to three different individuals (see the Comments below and the Comments at 5:1–17 for fuller discussions of these positions).

the leader. Heb. *hannāśîʾ,* from *n.ś.ʾ.,* "to lift" or "to carry." The LXX has *archonti.* This title appears only once in EN. In this absolute form with the definitive article, *hannāśîʾ,* it appears elsewhere only in Ezekiel. The root of the Hebrew title *nāśîʾ* indicates one who is elevated above others. Ezra 5:14 refers to Sheshbazzar as "governor," which most likely implies that meaning here as well. The implied authority of *nāśîʾ* in this period is not clear.

Forms of *nāśîʾ* appear primarily in Numbers (sixty-two times) and Ezekiel (thirty-seven), Joshua (thirteen), and Chronicles (six), with twelve more occasions in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. *Nāśîʾ* consistently indicates a leading representative of the community, be it a nation, tribe, or family (see, e.g., Num 2, 7). In Numbers, twelve such leaders bring an offering for the tabernacle on behalf of their tribe, a portion of it in the form of costly vessels. In Ezekiel, *nāśîʾ* sometimes designates a Davidic heir but also leaders of other nations (Ezek 26:16, 27:21). Ezekiel uses *nāśîʾ* distinctively. In chapters 40–48, *hannāśîʾ* (i.e., the absolute with the definite article, as here) refers to a figure with a special honorific role in the eschatological restoration. The LXX typically translates the term in that section of Ezekiel as *ho aphēgoumenos* (not *archōn,* which it uses elsewhere and here). Some scholars regard *hannāśîʾ* in Ezekiel 40–48 as a king, possibly from the house of David, with many of the expected royal prerogatives. Others find discontinuity with monarchic institutions (see Levenson 1976, 57–62, for a helpful overview). Although the *nāśîʾ* possesses privileges and special access in the temple (Ezek 44:1–3; 46:1–3, 8–10, 12) and is patron of liturgy (Ezek 45:13–17, 21–25; 46:4–7, 11), Levenson shows that these functions are limited and essentially honorific.

Levenson's (1976, 113) conclusion that "the *nāśîʾ* in Ezekiel 40–48 is a figure of great honor, however impotent," sheds light on the likely meaning in Ezra 1. The *nāśîʾ* "is a term from Sinai. . . . In terming his head of state *nāśîʾ,* Ezekiel sought to bring the institution of monarchy under the governance of the Sinaitic covenant" (ibid., 69). *Nāśîʾ,* then, "is a conscious and deliberate recalling of an earlier stage in Israelite politics" (ibid., 67). This sense likely applies to the *nāśîʾ* in Ezra 1:8.

Blenkinsopp (1988, 79) concludes that there is "no connection with the Davidic dynasty or with usage in Ezekiel's temple law." Williamson (1985, 18) (who translates *nāśîʾ* as "prince") likewise rejects Davidic associations and instead highlights allusions to the exodus narrative. The word *nāśîʾ* and the catalogue of vessels, then, most likely hark back to Numbers 7, where tribal heads provide vessels for the tabernacle.

Of the six occurrences of forms of *nāśîʾ* in Chronicles, four in the genealogies refer to non-Davidic tribal heads (1 Chr 2:10, 4:38, 5:6, 7:40) and two to leaders under King Solomon (2 Chr 1:2, 5:2). All with one exception (1 Chr 2:10) refer to people outside of the tribe of Judah. One thus cannot presume Davidic associations for *nāśîʾ* in EN.

of Judah. The province is meant here, rather than the tribe (so Japhet 1982, 97–98, on the basis of the prevalence of geographical references in Ezra 1).

1:9. *And these are their numbers.* Itemization begins, but numbers are inconsistent and some of the terms are obscure. Ezra 8:25–33 mentions weighing vessels, and refers less often to number.

gold dishes: 30; silver dishes: 1,000; knives: 29. These items do not appear elsewhere in the Bible or in extrabiblical sources. The numbers are more modest and realistic than those for gifts in Ezra 8:26–27.

dishes. Heb. *ʾăgarṭĕlîm;* the LXX has *psyktēres.* First Esdras 2:13 has *spondeia,* which the NRSV translates as "cups." Modern translations offer the following: "basins" (NJPS, NRSV, and Blenkinsopp 1988), "sacks of goldware" (New American Bible, 1976), "libation cups" (Japhet 2015, 158), and "jugs" (Fried 2015a, 71, on the basis of similarities to a Persian term that means "drinking cups"). As Fensham (1982, 46) observes, "the various attempts of modern scholars to explain *ʾăgarṭĕlîm* are still unsatisfactory."

30. First Esdras 2:13 has 1,000.

knives. Heb. *maḥălāpîm; the* LXX has *parēllagmena,* "changed," a sense related to the Hebrew verb *ḥ.l.p.* meaning "to change." First Esdras 2:13 has *thyiskai,* which the NRSV translates as "censers." Blenkinsopp (1988) uses "assorted."

1:10. *Gold bowls: 30; second silver bowls: 410; other vessels: 1,000.* Heb. *kĕphôrîm,* "bowls," is another unknown term. The LXX has *kephourē,* a transliteration. First Esdras omits the term, subsuming it under "vessels." *Kĕphôrîm* also appear among the vessels in Ezra 8:27 and 1 Chr 28:17. However, as Fensham (1982, 46) observes, every attempt to explain *kĕphôrîm* has failed.

second. Heb. *mišnîm;* the LXX has *diakosioi,* "two hundreds." But see Ezra 1:11 below.

410. The LXX omits and 1 Esd 2:13 adds "two thousand" to harmonize with the total in v. 11. Possibly it interprets here the Hebrew *mišnîm,* from "two."

1:11. *All vessels of gold and of silver, 5,400.* The tally does not match the itemized numbers, which add up to only 2,499. First Esdras 2:14 has 5,499, which harmonizes with the changes it made to the numbers in the list. Japhet (2019, 63–64) observes that the calculation of the numbers in the list depends on understanding *mišnîm.* Does *mišnîm,* here translated as "other," describe the vessels or refer to a number? M. Segal (2002) proposes a transmission error at work: A scribe misconstrued an accounting practice (familiar also from Elephantine) that entailed a shorthand for "thousand"; the original would have read "thousand: two" (hence, 2,000). This correction (which agrees with 1 Esd 2:13) brings the tally closer. Segal also argues that *maḥălāpîm,* from *ḥ.l.p.,* "to exchange," is a scribal marginal note indicating that the number 29 has to be changed, suggesting 920 instead. The correction results in 5,390 vessels, which the author rounds up to 5,400.

The numbers are mostly round numbers. This is a large number of cult implements, but there is no way to determine its reliability.

All did Sheshbazzar bring up with the going up of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. The translation reflects the awkwardness of the MT. The LXX is slightly different: "All that went up with Sheshbazzar from the captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem." First Esdras 2:15 has "they were carried back by Sheshbazzar with the returning exiles from Babylon, to Jerusalem." First Esdras, however, later credits Zerubbabel with bringing the vessels back to Jerusalem. Japhet (2013, 158) is perhaps too definite when she states, "According to Ezra 1, the vessels were indeed brought back to Jerusalem, a fact confirmed by 1 Esd 6:18–19 (= Ezra 5:15–16)." The elders in Ezra 5:14–16 confirm that the vessels were given to Sheshbazzar but say nothing about their arrival. They do, however, credit Sheshbazzar with laying the temple's foundation.

EN's language here ties the vessels' journey closely to the people and will further tie it through repeated language in Ezra 2:1. The monarchy, so prominent in the debate about the vessels in Jeremiah 27–28, is replaced here by the people.

the going up. Heb. *hēʿālôt* (*ʿ.l.h.* in the *niphal* infinitive). Forms of the verb *ʿ.l.h.,* "to go up," indicate a major theme of the book from the beginning. Going up was commanded by Cyrus (Ezra 1:3) and began to be carried out by the people in Ezra 1:5. It is picked up in 2:1, which heads the list of returnees. Retrieval of the temple vessels marks their release from captivity and is a concrete sign of God's redemptive action. With them, the first step in founding the temple begins, and another proclamation by the prophet Jeremiah finds completion (Ezra 1:1, Jer 27:22).

of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. This phrase explicitly expresses the reversal of exile.

exiles. Heb. *gôlâ.* The noun (singular, feminine) appears most often in the Bible in EN, thirteen times of forty-one (with eleven in Ezekiel and ten in Jeremiah). It can refer to a place of exile or to the exiles as a collective. In Jeremiah it mostly refers to the exiled people (see, e.g., Jer 29:4). In EN it is confined to Ezra 1–10 and once in Neh 7:6 (the parallel to Ezra 2:1). Blenkinsopp (1988) translates *gôlâ* in Ezra 1:11 as "exiles" but as "diaspora" in 2:1. He renders *bĕnê haggôlâ* in 4:1 as "those who returned from captivity," but then simply as "exiles" in 6:19–20 and "exile" in 6:21. These variations reflect the range of meanings and the difficulty in capturing the nuance in EN with a single term. In the early portions of EN it most likely refers to descendants of people who were physically exiled from their land.

EN shows remarkably little interest in the experience of exile. Jeremiah 24:1–8 records heated polemics, depicting those still in the land as "bad figs," apparently responding to the charge that the exiles are the sinful ones. Isaiah 40–55 regards the exiles as purified by their exile and suffering. EN does not engage this topic directly. Yet by repeatedly naming the community as "the *gôlâ*" or "sons of the *gôlâ,*" EN privileges the exiles as the legitimate bearers of Judean continuity and restoration. Several scholars (e.g., Blenkinsopp 1988, Japhet 2019, and Southwood 2012) claim that EN regards the *gôlâ* community as the only legitimate one. The issue will come to the fore in Ezra 9–10 in the conflict about the peoples in the land(s). See further the Notes at Ezra 2:1, 6:21, 8:35, and 9:4 and the Comments there.

Babylon. Heb. *bābel,* can mean the city of Babylon (near today's Baghdad, Iraq) or the kingdom of Babylon (southern Mesopotamia), usually translated as Babylonia (or metonymically both). An ancient city and civilization, Babylon flourished from the eighteenth century BCE, at the time of Hammurabi, but was eclipsed and conquered by the Assyrians in the ninth century BCE. It regained its power in 609 BCE during the Neo-Babylonian period and reached its height under Nebuchadnezzar II. Cyrus did not destroy Babylon when he conquered it, so the city remained a major center for the Persian Empire as well, but under Persian administration. Its massive remains testify even today to a glorious and powerful city in the Neo-Babylonian period and throughout the Persian period. Babylon in EN presumably encompasses both city and hinterland.

Comments

THE TEMPLE VESSELS

EN emphasizes three times that King Cyrus returned the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had confiscated (Ezra 1:7–11, 5:14–15, 6:5; see Notes at Ezra 1:7). Temples in the ancient world housed treasures, contributions, dedication offerings, and precious implements used for the care of the gods. Thus, when Sennacherib conquered Babylon in 689 BCE, he boasted in his inscription of looting Marduk's temple treasury (Luckenbill 1924, 83–84; II.53–54; see van de Mieroop 2004).

Conquerors kept booty in royal and temple treasuries (as 2 Kings, EN, and Chronicles also claim). Given Babylon's sophisticated administration, one can suppose that items were recorded before being stored or distributed. King Cyrus in the Cyrus Cylinder claims that he returned objects to their sanctuaries. In principle, then, one can

postulate Judean temple vessels being returned to Judean hands. But it is difficult to imagine that loot from Judah would have been kept distinct, available for retrieval.

The list of returned vessels in Ezra 1:9–11 does not match those taken (2 Kgs 25) or resemble other lists of temple vessels in the Bible. Its limited range (three categories) suggests an incomplete record. Second Kings states, "They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and all the bronze vessels used in the temple service, as well as the firepans and the basins. What was made of gold the captain of the guard took away for the gold, and what was made of silver, for the silver" (2 Kgs 25:14–15, NRSV). But Ezra 1 mentions only three terms—*ʾăgarṭĕlîm, kĕphôrîm,* and *maḥălāphîm*—and their meanings are unknown aside from the general term for vessels, *kēlîm.* The first two terms are unique to this list. Inconsistent numbers in the list add to the problems.

Surprisingly, scholars concur that the list in Ezra 1:7–11 is a genuine inventory in the author's possession (Rudolph 1949, 7; Gunneweg 1985, 47; Williamson 1985, xxvi; Blenkinsopp 1988, 78; Fried 2015a, 84–85; and even Torrey 1910, 138–39). The form of the list, which resembles those from Elephantine (e.g., *TAD* C 3.13), and the difficult loan words have influenced this conclusion (see Williamson 1985, 7–8; Fried 2015a, 84–85). Such scholars, however, do not consider the list a reliable record of the returned temple vessels but of other vessels that can no longer be situated, perhaps related to the temple at the author's time. Fried, for example, supposes that the author, following a Hellenistic convention, used an available list "to increase the reader's confidence in the historical reliability of the text" (ibid., 85).

Be that as it may, the most important historical and interpretive problems remain: Where were the vessels stored until the building was complete in 516/515 BCE? And, above all, what happened to them (since there is no record that they reached the temple)?

Ancient sources already reflect the confusion. The versions are inconsistent in their rendering of these items, indicating that their meaning had been lost early. First Esdras, which regularly appends "holy" to "vessels," deals with aspects of the problem. In its story of the Three Guardsmen (1 Esd 3–4), Zerubbabel asks King Darius "to send back all the vessels that were taken from Jerusalem, which Cyrus set apart when he began to destroy Babylon, and vowed to send them back there" (1 Esd 4:44). In 1 Esdras, then, the vessels had not reached Judah during Cyrus's reign. This explains how they could have been preserved for decades until the temple was rebuilt. But it does not solve the problem of their nonarrival. Biblical accounts are inconclusive: EN only insists (three times) that the vessels were delivered into Judean hands and taken up to Jerusalem.

Josephus, like 1 Esdras, seeks to remedy the situation: Cyrus gave these "to his treasurer Mithridates to carry, instructing him to give them to Abassaros to keep until the temple should be built, and upon its being completed to turn them over to the priests and leaders of the people to be deposited in the temple" (*Ant.* XI.i.3 // XI.10–11).

As Fried (2015a, 28–29) observes, the symbolic power of vessels extends beyond messages of continuity. In the ANE the return of cult statues demonstrated the god's reconciliation with his people. Fried suggests that for the aniconic religion of the Bible, the vessels take the place of the statues (ibid., 83–85). The most important message about the vessels, then, is that they signal a reversal. They matter less as a historical datum and more as a symbol of God's readiness to redeem Israel.

Kalimi and Purvis (1994a), who carefully explore the Chronicler's adaptation of 2 Kings 24 and 25, observe that the deported vessels in Chronicles presumably remain intact and are not cut up as in 2 Kgs 24:13. Chronicles, then, with the temple of its own time in view, aims "to demonstrate that the holiness of Zerubbabel's temple was not less than Solomon's" (ibid., 455); the emphasis on the vessels was to compensate for the absence of the ark. Compensation for the ark makes good sense for EN's emphasis as well.

Unlike memories about the ark that grow in importance throughout the centuries down to the present (with elaborate traditions about its survival in hiding), the temple vessels fade from view. The one major canonical "afterlife" moment is when King Belshazzar dishonors the vessels in a drinking feast (Dan 5:1–4) and receives the handwriting on the wall as a result (in Dan 1:1 some temple vessels were deported to Babylon).

The book of Baruch (in the LXX; dated 200–60 BCE) reports that Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, "took the vessels of the house of the Lord, which had been carried away from the temple, to return them to the land of Judah—the silver vessels that Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, had made, after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away from Jerusalem Jeconiah and the princes and the prisoners and the nobles and the people of the land, and brought them to Babylon" (Bar 1:8–9). This version identifies the vessels as Zedekiah's.

In 2 Bar. 2:7–9 (dated 70–132 CE), God's angel makes the earth the protective custodian of the vessels until Jerusalem "will be restored forever" (2 Bar. 6:9). In 4 Bar. 3:1–19, God commands Jeremiah and Baruch to bury the holy vessels; the vessels are to remain in the earth "until the coming of the beloved one" (4 Bar. 3:11).

EN, in contrast to 1 Esdras, does not append "holy" to "vessels." Certain consecrated vessels arrive with Ezra (Ezra 8:28), and those vessels are duly transferred to temple authorities (8:33–34). But they are not the confiscated temple vessels. As for the missing ark, EN looks to the *torah* instead, placing it not at the temple, but with the people (see esp. Neh 8).

THE IDENTITY AND ROLES OF SHESHBAZZAR

The mystery surrounding the vessels and their fate goes hand in hand with the mystery surrounding Sheshbazzar. We read that the temple vessels were turned over to him (Ezra 1:7–11, 5:14–16). His name appears only in EN; but the name Shenazzar, the Davidic descendant and uncle of Zerubbabel in 1 Chr 3:18, closely resembles it.

Sheshbazzar appears without a patronym. EN identifies him first as the *nāśîʾ* of Judah who received the vessels from Cyrus's treasurer (Ezra 1:8) and brought them up when the exiles went up to Judah (1:11). The Judean elders in Ezra 5:14–16 state that Cyrus appointed Sheshbazzar governor. According to them, Sheshbazzar not only received the temple vessels from Cyrus and his official, but also laid the temple's foundations. Yet 3:8–13 credits Zerubbabel with laying the foundations, and so do Haggai and Zechariah.

The ancient sources already reflect confusion concerning Sheshbazzar. First Esdras first refers to Sheshbazzar as Sanabassar or Samanassar and titles him *prostatos.* First Esdras 6:18 links him with Zerubbabel, claiming that both laid the temple's foundations ("Zerubbabel and Sanabbasaro the governor [*aparchon*]"). The similarity between the name Sheshbazzar in EN and Shenazzar in 1 Chr 3:18 probably accounts for the

peculiarities of the name in 1 Esdras. First Esdras highlights a Davidic connection (for 1 Esdras's emphasis on David, see Japhet 1982, 1983a; and Eskenazi 1986).

Josephus calls him Asassaros (*Ant.* XI.11) but then refers to Sanabasaros as the one whom Cyrus commissions (*Ant.* XI.91–95). Pseudo Rashi (Ezra 1:8) equates Sheshbazzar with Daniel.

Several interpreters regard Sheshbazzar as another name for Shenazzar, a Davidic descendant in 1 Chr 3:18 (Meyer 1896, 76–77; Myers 1965a; Ben Yashar 1981). This would be consistent with Persian policies, which often retained native leaders (on Persian practices, see Jursa 2007, 78–79). EN's silence about his Davidic lineage would be consistent with the book's general omission of titles: EN does not identify Zerubbabel with his Davidic lineage (claimed in 1 Chr 3:19) or his title as governor (according to Haggai).

But the identification of Sheshbazzar and Shenazzar has largely lost favor. Berger (1971), for example, shows that the two names derive from different Akkadian names and must be treated separately (also Dion 1983). Most scholars today consider Sheshbazzar a different individual but debate about his historical identity. The majority consider Sheshbazzar to be Judean, his Babylonian name notwithstanding (Williamson 1985, 17–19; Blenkinsopp 1988, 78–79; Eskenazi 1992b; Becking 2018, 34–35). As Becking (ibid., 33) observes, descendants of exiles in cuneiform Babylonian tablets bear Babylonian names while some of their ancestors or descendants bear Judean ones. Fried (2015a, 82), however, suspects that he was a Babylonian.

Silverman (2015, 308–21) suggests that Sheshbazzar was a Neo-Babylonian governor of Judah, appointed before the time of Cyrus after the assassination of Gedaliah (Jer 41; 2 Kgs 25:25). The Babylonians chose a Babylonian in lieu of the Judean nobility that Gedaliah represented; Cyrus merely reconfirmed Sheshbazzar's earlier appointment. However, it seems best to conclude with the majority that the authors of EN considered Sheshbazzar Judean, which is why Ezra 1:8 uses the Judean title *nāśîʾ*.

Japhet's (1982, 1983a // 2006, 53–84, 85–95) extensive analysis of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel reviews the various positions and reconstructs the history that gave rise to the confusion. According to Japhet, the report in Ezra 5 is reliable. Ezra 1 uses it and accounts for the elders' claim that Sheshbazzar is the first governor.

Although the problems with Sheshbazzar cannot be completely resolved, or the history accessed, EN's picture of him can be understood this way: Cyrus permitted the rebuilding, appointed Sheshbazzar governor, and gave him the vessels. Sheshbazzar went to Jerusalem and laid foundations but did not complete them. Sheshbazzar led in the days of Cyrus, and Zerubbabel in those of Darius. Sheshbazzar's efforts left vague memories. As Japhet (1982, 93–94) writes, "At the distance from which the author of Ezra-Nehemiah wrote, this figure already appears pushed into a corner and another figure stands in the foreground" (see also Japhet 2006, 78–79; and the Comments at Ezra 5:1–17).

II.

The List of Builders (2:1–70)

Introduction and Structure

EN's account of life in the land begins with a very long list of people (Ezra 2:1–70). Josephus omits the list lest (he explains) it distract readers from the narrative (*Ant.* XI.68 // XI.iii.10). For EN, however, the list is key to the narrative. It introduces the human protagonists of the book, namely, the people. The repetition of the list in Nehemiah 7 emphasizes its importance.

The list's location in Ezra 2 casts it as a direct response to Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1. The heading defines it as a record of those who returned from exile to Judah (Ezra 2:1). Ezra 2:64–65 reports that the community consisted of 42,360 Judeans plus additional service personnel, singers, and animals (so too Neh 7:66 and 1 Esd 5:41). Nehemiah in the mid-fifth century BCE refers to the virtually identical list as "the book of registration [*sēper hayyaḥaś*] of those going up at first" (MT Neh 7:5–72 [ET 7:5–73]). He consults it as prelude to repopulating Jerusalem.

Debates persist about the date, origin, compositional history, historical reliability, and purpose of the list in Ezra 2, as well as its relation to Nehemiah 7. Its repetition in Nehemiah 7 has been used to argue that Ezra and Nehemiah are separate books (as they are in most English translations). But the list in fact unifies the three stages of reconstruction and expresses one of EN's key messages: the primacy of the whole people in restoring the house of God (see Eskenazi 1988a, 1988b).

The list incorporates different types of records, some of which expanded over time (like most ancient lists). The core was probably composed initially as a census for tax purposes and subsequently "updated." The main versions of the list may date to the mid-fifth century BCE, but the final form includes later information. The heading (Ezra 2:1–2a) was appended last to integrate it into the book.

It is not altogether clear what the list claims: Does it claim that 42,360 returnees came in the very early Persian period (in the late sixth century BCE)? If so, it blatantly conflicts with archaeological data that preclude a mass return to Judah in the early Per-

sian period. Or (as is more likely) does it imply that the returnees continued to arrive, through Nehemiah's time in the mid-fifth century BCE? Does the information reflect the total number of Judeans in Judah throughout the Persian period, only returnees, or only those present at its peak?

While several scholars conclude, as Fried (2015a, 87) does, that the "location of this list of returnees in the book of Ezra implies a return under Cyrus (538 BCE)," the names in the heading of the list (Ezra 2:1–2a) point to later stages of return. It is therefore better to recognize the list as a proleptic summary, or "flash forward," a comprehensive list that introduces people from the beginning of the return to the time of celebration in Nehemiah 8–12 in the mid-fifth century BCE. It identifies the legitimate members of the reconstructed community. Moreover, through its repetition in Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73], the list consolidates three stages of return and reconstruction. It unifies the building of the temple (Ezra 3–6), the community (Ezra 7–10), and the restoration of Jerusalem's wall (see the Comments [2:1–70] following Ezra 2:70).

The structure of Ezra 2:1–70 is as follows:

A. Introduction and the list of leaders (2:1–2a // Neh 7:6–7a)
B. The list of Israelites (2:2b–35 // Neh 7:7b–38)
    1. Family or community members (2:2b–20)
    2. Town members (2:21–35)
C. The priests (2:36–39 // Neh 7:39–42)
D. Other cult personnel (2:40–58 // Neh 7:43–60)
    1. Levites (2:40)
    2. Singers (2:41)
    3. Gatekeepers (2:42)
    4. Netinim and Solomon's servants (2:43–58)
        a. Netinim (2:43–54)
        b. Solomon's servants (2:55–57)
        c. Summary (2:58)
E. Cases of the undocumented (2:59–63 // Neh 7:61–65)
F. Summary, conclusion, and arrival (2:64–70 // Neh 7:66–72 [ET 73])
    1. Summary (2:64–69)
        a. Total of community members (2:64)
        b. Slaves and singers (2:65)
        c. Transport animals (horses, mules, camels, etc.) (2:66–67)
        d. Donations/contributions upon arrival (2:68–69)
    2. Conclusion: All the people are (re)settled in their places (2:70)

A. Introduction and the List of Leaders (2:1–2a)

2 [1]And these are the sons of the province, those going up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had exiled to Babylonia; and they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his town, [2a]who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

Introduction

Ezra 2:1–2a introduces eleven leaders. Nehemiah 7:6–7 reproduces the nearly identical list (but with twelve leaders) as the record of those who came "at first." The heading includes people who can be dated in EN from 520 BCE (Zerubbabel and Jeshua) down to the mid-fifth century BCE (Nehemiah, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah). This suggests that late editors expanded the heading (and the list), as is common in ANE lists. None of these leaders, except perhaps Bilshan and Bigvai, can be identified reliably in extrabiblical sources, except in the derivative account in 1 Esdras. The Notes therefore concentrate on the distribution of the leaders' names in EN.

The twelve names in the parallel at Neh 7:7 show small variants for the less prominent names; Neh 7:7 also includes a Nahamani, not listed in Ezra 2. The most important difference is the name Azariah in Neh 7:7 since it suggests a variant of Ezra who is otherwise missing from Ezra 2:1–2a. The LXX follows the MT and shows typical variations in spelling without shedding light on the list beyond confirming that this part of the list has been edited. First Esdras 5:8 also has twelve names but places the list in the time of King Darius, that is, after 522 BCE.

Notes

2:1. *And these are the sons of the province, those going up from the captivity of the exiles.* The list identifies community members. Linguistic details, such as the "going up" and *gôlâ,* link this verse with Ezra 1:11 (see below).

sons. Heb. *bĕnê.* The term means members of a group, not only males or biological relations. Williamson's (1985) and Fried's (2015a) choices of "family" and Blenkinsopp's (1988) "descendants" are therefore apt. But given the emphasis on male lineage in EN (no mothers are mentioned), it seems best to retain the masculine form in translation. The verse emphasizes belonging, citizenship, and membership, with biological relation implied.

the province. Heb. *hammĕdînâ.* Context implies that the term refers to Judah (and not Babylon, as Pseudo Ibn Ezra suggests), as in Neh 1:3. Judah (Yehud, in the Aramaic sources) was a province within the larger Persian satrapy named *ʿăbar-nahărâ* in Aramaic sources (e.g., Ezra 4:10), meaning Across-the-River, that is, west of the Euphrates.

those going up from the captivity of the exiles. "Captivity," Heb. *šĕbî,* here in construct form, refers to the Babylonian deportations of 597 and 586 BCE, depicted in 2 Kings 24–25 and Jeremiah 52. EN shows little interest in details regarding the destruction or the deportations. Instead, it underscores the role of diaspora members in the reconstruction that follows. The language, "going up," echoes the vessels going up in Ezra 1:11.

the exiles. Heb. *haggôlâ,* an abstract noun that refers both to a place of exile and, collectively, to the people exiled, "the exiles" (as in Jer 29:4). This latter sense seems more common in EN (e.g., Ezra 1:11 and 9:4). See further Notes at Ezra 1:11.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. See Notes at Ezra 1:7. Spelled here according to the Q. The K has Nebuchadnezor.

to Babylonia. Heb. *bābel* can mean the city "Babylon" or "Babylonia," that is, the province, which is more likely here.

they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each one to his town. Mesopotamian records document a people's return to ancestral homes after generations in exile. Babylonian and Persian policies enabled deportees to remain as communities when deported and resettled. The Al Yahudu tablets from Babylonia establish the presence of Judeans in a Babylonian "Judah-town," named apparently after their place of origin. These suggest continued group identity in exile and make a return to "their town" in the homeland plausible. As Alstola (2018, 209–19) notes, deportees from Neirab in Syria lived in a town named Neirab in Mesopotamia, as Judeans did in Babylonian Al Yahudu. Tablets show that some of these Neirabians returned to Neirab in the Levant, their group's original hometown.

The return to each person's town will be reiterated at the conclusion of the list (Ezra 2:70). The Hebrew for "returned" (*yāšûbhû*) echoes the Hebrew for captivity (*šĕbhî*) earlier, underscoring the reversal from captivity to a return. It also echoes "settled," *yēšĕbû,* in Ezra 2:70.

Jerusalem and Judah. Several towns listed were in the Benjamin territory, which EN reckons as part of the province of Judah. Jerusalem itself remained primarily the home of cult personnel.

his town. Only some towns are named in the list (see Ezra 2:21–35), most of them in the Benjamin region. There is no indication where in Judah most of the people resettled. One expects priests to have gone to Jerusalem, but Jerusalem is not in the list (only in this heading).

2:2a // Neh 7:7a. *who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.* The heading seems to imply that these eleven leaders (twelve in the parallel in Neh 7:7) belong to the earliest return to Judah (ca. 538 BCE). But some of the names appear in EN during Nehemiah's tenure (ca. 444 BCE). This is most pronounced with Nehemiah and Seraiah on the one hand and Baanah on the other. Their names frame the list of those signing the communal pledge (Neh 10:2, 28). Bigvai and Rehum also appear in that pledge (Neh 10:17, 26), an account situated in 444 BCE or later. Cross-reference seems to be implied. Apart from the protagonist of Nehemiah 1–13, only one other Nehemiah appears in the Bible (Neh 3:16, also in mid-fifth century BCE). The only Mordecai in the Bible is in Esther, in a story situated in the 480s BCE. Such literary clues point to a list that spans several generations down to Nehemiah's time. This interpretation fits the function of the list, namely, a proleptic summary or "flash forward" that foreshadows what is to come. It incorporates all who partook in the project of reconstruction from the beginning to Ezra and Nehemiah's time. The historicity of the named leaders in Ezra 2:2, like that of most Judeans in EN, cannot be verified.

Zerubbabel. The name, meaning "seed/offspring of Babylon," derives from *zerubibli* in East Semitic and may indicate that Zerubbabel was born in Babylonia (not that he was Babylonian). According to Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel was one of two main leaders responsible for founding the second temple at the time of King Darius in 520 BCE. MT Haggai titles him "governor" whereas the LXX designates him as "Zerubbabel of the tribe of Judah" (Hag 1:1). Haggai regards him as God's signet ring (Hag 2:23), suggesting royal status. First Chronicles 3:17–19 places Zerubbabel in the Davidic genealogy, but as son of Pedaiah, not Shealtiel, his ancestor in EN (Ezra 3:2). First Esdras 5:5 spells out the Davidic lineage of Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel's position as a Judean governor of Judah aligns with the Persian policy of appointing members of the local ruling classes to secure stability and goodwill toward the empire. Yet although EN casts Zerubbabel as a major leader, it does not mention his position either as governor or as a Davidic scion. EN presents Zerubbabel as one of the two chief leaders in Stage One of reconstruction. In EN he heads the return from exile (Ezra 2:1–2 // Neh 7:6–7), supervises building the altar with Jeshua (Ezra 3:1–7), founds the temple (Ezra 3:8–13), rebuffs "outsiders" (Ezra 4), and (with Jeshua) renews building efforts after their interruption (Ezra 5:1–2). Surprisingly, Zerubbabel is absent from reports about the temple's full restoration (see Notes at Ezra 5:14 and 6:14). Earlier scholars concluded, therefore, that Zerubbabel was removed from office under a cloud, possibly due to his (or the prophets') messianic or rebellious aspirations. But as Japhet (1982, 1983a) has shown, other leading figures disappear from EN's reconstruction account once their task is accomplished. This pattern reflects EN's insistence on highlighting the community's role in the reconstruction rather than privileging leaders (see Eskenazi 1988a).

Zerubbabel is almost always paired with the priest Jeshua in EN (also in Haggai and Zechariah), suggesting a diarchy.

Although Ezra 1–6 highlights Zerubbabel's leadership, it nonetheless complicates a straightforward interpretation of his roles in the restoration of the temple. Ezra 5:14–16 credits Sheshbazzar as the governor who laid the temple's foundations. The report about the completion of the temple in Ezra 6:13–18 omits Zerubbabel, which challenges Zechariah's prophecy in Zech 4:8–10 but may be consonant with the ambiguous messages of Zech 6:12–15. Attempts to equate Zerubbabel with Sheshbazzar (the mysterious figure titled Judah's *nāśî'*, i.e., "prince" or "ruler," in Ezra 1:8, to whom Cyrus entrusts the temple's vessels) prove unconvincing (Japhet 1982, 1983a).

What history, then, can be construed from this information? Possibly Sheshbazzar emerged in an early stage during Cyrus's reign but accomplished little; Zerubbabel (and Joshua/Jeshua) followed, with successful reconstruction under Darius I, beginning in 520 BCE. Nehemiah 12:1 reiterates Zerubbabel's leading role in reconstruction by beginning its genealogy of priests from the time of Zerubbabel. It thus corroborates Zerubbabel's central role at the beginning.

Pairing Zerubbabel with Joshua/Jeshua (Haggai, Zechariah, and EN) implies that Zerubbabel was the administrative or civic ruler and Jeshua the leading priest in charge of the cult.

First Chronicles 3:17–19 complicates Zerubbabel's lineage, listing him as grandson of Judah's last king Jeconiah (Jehoiachin), but son of Pedaiah (youngest brother of Shealtiel in 1 Chr 3:18). This contrasts with both Haggai and EN where Zerubbabel's father is Shealtiel. Attempts to harmonize the two lineages (such as Rudolph's [1949, 29] theory of adoption when Zerubbabel lost his biological father) are unconvincing; so too Pseudo Ibn Ezra and Albright (1921), who propose two Zerubbabels. It is better to allow that the Bible preserves different traditions, with Shealtiel the more established. In either case, Zerubbabel is the last member of the Davidic family to have a major role in the Hebrew Bible. Names like those of his offspring in 1 Chr 3:19–20 appear in EN but play no definitive role (but see Notes on Hattush at Ezra 8:2 and on Shelomith, sister of Zerubbabel in 1 Chr 3:19, at Ezra 8:10).

As a Davidic heir, Zerubbabel may have elicited expectations that the Judean monarchy would regain its position. Haggai's last words announce Zerubbabel's unique role in God's plan, linking him with eschatological promises: Zerubbabel is God's "servant" and "signet ring," destined to be part of the revolution in which empires will fall (Hag 2:20–23). The prophet Zechariah, shortly after 520 BCE, likewise identifies Zerubbabel as the restorer of the temple's foundation (Zech 4:4–6) and proclaims that Zerubbabel will complete the task (Zech 4:8–10). Zechariah also mentions an unnamed anointed "shoot" to be enthroned alongside the high priest Joshua, possibly alluding to a Davidic heir, either Zerubbabel or his descendant.

Later traditions enlarge the portrait of Zerubbabel but without adding reliable historical information. First Esdras, which elsewhere depends on EN, adds chapters that magnify Zerubbabel's role (1 Esd 3:1–5:6). In 1 Esdras, Zerubbabel persuades King Darius to authorize rebuilding the temple and then persuades others to go up, leading them to complete the task. First Esdras 6:18 smooths ambiguities by specifying that Cyrus gave the vessels also to Zerubbabel (not only Sheshbazzar as in Ezra 1) and that Darius appointed Zerubbabel governor in charge of rebuilding the temple (1 Esd 6:27). Nothing in 1 Esdras suggests that Zerubbabel did not complete the task.

Sirach 49:11–12 refers to Zerubbabel as God's signet ring and builder of the temple, echoing Haggai, while Josephus (*Ant.* XI.iii.1–8 // XI.29–63) largely follows 1 Esdras with the story of the three bodyguards and Zerubbabel's Davidic origin; Josephus writes that Zerubbabel received the vessels from King Cyrus (*Ant.* XI.iv.4 // XI.92–94). The New Testament includes Zerubbabel in Jesus's genealogies. Both Matthew (Matt 1:12–13) and Luke (Luke 3:27) list him as Shealtiel's son (albeit with a transliterated version of the name), but with different grandfathers (Jechoniah in Matthew, as in 1 Chr 3:17–19, and Neri in Luke). A medieval Jewish work, *Sepher Zerubbabel* (or "The Apocalypse of Zerubbabel"), casts him as a recipient of apocalyptic visions. And several Free Mason groups, starting in the eighteenth century, regard Zerubbabel the builder as an important figure.

Jeshua. Heb. *yēšûaʿ*. The name is a postexilic form of *yĕhôšûaʿ*/Joshua, meaning "YHWH saves," but without the theophoric element. Jeshua son of Jozadak (see Ezra 3:2) is the leading priest in Stage One of the reconstruction in Judah (according to EN, Haggai, and Zechariah). Haggai and Zechariah specify that he was "the high priest" (*hakkōhēn haggādôl;* see, e.g., Hag 1:1 and Zech 3:1). EN lacks this title (the only recognized "high priest" in EN is Eliashib; see Neh 3:1). EN credits Jeshua, together with Zerubbabel, with a major role in founding the second temple (in 520–515 BCE). Surprisingly, Chronicles does not mention Jeshua despite its emphasis on priestly genealogies and a genealogy that mentions Zerubbabel (1 Chr 3:19).

In EN, Jeshua works closely with Zerubbabel. These leaders launch the founding of the temple and celebrate the occasion (Ezra 3:8–13). Both respond to the exhortations of Haggai and Zechariah and resume building activities after opponents halted rebuilding (5:2). Yet neither is mentioned in the dedication of the temple in Ezra 6:14–22.

Jeshua's family is listed first among the priests in Ezra 2:36. Members of his family consent to divorce their wives and make atonement (Ezra 10:18–19); this is the only family where divorce is specified. His lineage is traced (Neh 11:10) and his importance is signaled again when his descendants constitute the chief priestly line down to Nehemiah's time (Neh 12:1–26).

Jeshua is prominent in Haggai and even more in Zechariah. These books, situated earlier than EN, refer eight times to Jeshua as Joshua (*yĕhôšûaʿ*) son of Jehozadak the high priest—a relatively rare biblical title. (References to future, anonymous high priests appear in Num 35:25 and Josh 20:6 in connection with cities of refuge. Only two individuals are so designated in texts about preexilic Judah: Jehoiada in 2 Kgs 12:11 [ET 12:10] and Hilkiah in 2 Kgs 22 and 2 Chr 34.)

Haggai typically addresses Joshua and Zerubbabel together, each with his full title (Hag 1:1), but ends with a message to Zerubbabel (Hag 2:21) that elevates him over Joshua. Zechariah, instead, focuses on Joshua. Zechariah 3 envisions Joshua's purification, rendering him fit for holy office, possibly after the contamination of exile. Oracles bestow further responsibilities upon the newly purified high priest, some that seem like royal prerogatives (e.g., administering justice in Zech 3:7). Joshua and his fellow priests are also promised access to the heavenly court, a privilege normally associated with prophets (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 190–99). Zechariah does not eliminate the Davidic ruler but redefines power spheres with unprecedented authority for the priest. Another vision depicts two unnamed anointed (Zech 4:1–14, esp. v. 14), presumably Joshua and Zerubbabel, reiterating the diarchic pattern of Haggai.

Zechariah 6:9–15 depicts Joshua's investiture with royal emblems. Zechariah is instructed to crown Joshua and announce that the priest will have a seat beside a Davidic descendent. Royal imagery for Joshua is so startling that some scholars detect a possible dispute about the role of the high priest in relation to the Davidide (e.g., Petersen 1984, 275).

Chronicles does not mention Jeshua, a puzzling silence given his priestly role in earlier texts (Haggai, Zechariah, and EN) and given that Chronicles includes Zerubbabel in David's genealogy (1 Chr 3:19) and preserves an extensive priestly genealogy (1 Chr 5:27–41 [ET 6:1–15]), concluding with Jehozadak (Jeshua's father in EN, Haggai, and Zechariah), reporting that Jehozadak was exiled to Babylon. Jeshua could have been born in Babylon, coming to Judah with Zerubbabel after ca. 522 BCE (Ezra 2 // Neh 7). Similarities between Jehozadak's genealogy (1 Chr 5:27–41 [ET 6:1–15]) and Ezra's pedigree (Ezra 7:1–5) imply that Jeshua and Ezra were understood to be close relatives, but biblical sources do not link their names directly. Eliashib, the sole designated high priest in EN (Neh 3:1, 3:20), is apparently Jeshua's grandson (Neh 12:10).

Haggai, Zechariah, and EN attach unprecedented religious and civil authority to Jeshua and redefine spheres of control. Their diarchic structure of a (high) priest and (Davidic) governor replaces preexilic subordination of priesthood to royalty. Jeshua's elevation initiates a cultic authority that will typify much of the Second Temple period until 70 CE.

EN provides the most detailed narrative about Jeshua's activities. Yet EN diminishes somewhat the status of Jeshua by not calling him "high priest." Furthermore, EN assigns the most important priestly role to Ezra the priest and scribe. Still, Jeshua looms large as a foundational figure.

Jeshua appears in 1 Esdras essentially as he does in EN. However, the added prominence accorded Zerubbabel in 1 Esdras proportionately diminishes Jeshua's significance and eclipses Jeshua's role.

Ben Sira 49:12 mentions Jeshua alongside Zerubbabel as jointly building the house of God, while Josephus (*Ant.* XI.iii.10), like 1 Esdras, eclipses Jeshua (listed as Jesus), "the son of the high priest Josedekos," by his elaborate depiction of Zerubbabel's roles.

Nehemiah. The name means "Yah comforts" or "comforted by Yah," that is, YHWH. The only leading biblical figure bearing this name is Nehemiah son of Hacaliah, whose words and activities dominate Nehemiah 1–13. Nehemiah 2:1 points to 444 BCE as the beginning of Nehemiah's mission. The one other Nehemiah in the Bible (Neh 3:16) is among the builders of the wall. Forms of this name appear in extrabiblical sources throughout the Persian period (see Fried 2015a, 93, for examples from Arad and Samaria), but none for a person of significance. One can conclude that the present text refers to Nehemiah son of Hacaliah; it appears here proleptically.

Seraiah. A name meaning "officer of Yah," that is, of YHWH. Blenkinsopp (1988, 85) identifies this figure with Ezra. The parallel in Neh 7:7 has Azariah. Both versions suggest a connection to Ezra: Ezra's father was Seraiah (Ezra 7:1) and the name Azariah can be a variant of Ezra. However, the name Seraiah is common in both EN and elsewhere in the Bible. Significantly, Seraiah appears (with Azariah) among the priests who sign the pledge (Neh 10:3); in Neh 11:11 the name designates a highly positioned priest, whereas Neh 12:1 includes a priest Seraiah along with an Ezra in Zerubbabel's and Jeshua's entourage. At least eight men are named Seraiah in the Elephantine papyri.

Reelaiah. The parallel in Neh 7:7 has Raamiah, followed by Nahamani (who is not included in Ezra 2:2). This individual is otherwise unknown.

Mordecai. The name echoes the Akkadian "Marduk," chief of the Mesopotamian pantheon. The name appears elsewhere only for the hero of the book of Esther, set at the time of Ahasuerus (486–465 BCE).

Bilshan. The same name is in Neh 7:7 but is otherwise unknown. A Bēlšanu is a satrap of the province Across-the-River in the late fifth century BCE (Stolper 1989b, 299–310), and that form of the name appears in Persepolis records (Persepolis Fortification Tablets 2018.21 [Hallock 1969]; so Fried 2015a, 95); but it is hard to connect that person with any Judeans. Rabbinic sages attach linguistic skills to this person because the trilateral root *l.š.n.* relates to "tongue" and hence language (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 77–78).

Mispar. The name means "number." The noun appears four words later: "the number (*mispār*) of the men of the people of Israel" (Ezra 2:2b). Nehemiah 7:7 has a feminine form of the name, Mispereth.

Bigvai. The same name designates a major group in Ezra 2:14 and a smaller one in 8:14. The name is formed from the Persian *baga,* "god" (Clines 1984, 49). BDB suggests the Sanskrit *bhagavan,* "happy." In Neh 10:17 it refers to a contemporary of Nehemiah among those signing the communal pledge. Especially important are extrabiblical forms: Bagoas and Bagohi. A Bagohi (possibly a later form of the same name; so Cowley 1923, 108) appears as governor of Judah in 408 BCE (see *TAD* A 4.7.1, 4.8.1 // Cowley 30, 31). Judeans from Elephantine enlist his help to rebuild their temple in Elephantine. A response memorandum indicates that Bagohi (with Samaria's representative) consented (*TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32). If the texts refer to the same individual, then the list reaches into the late Persian period, later than Nehemiah. Bigvai does not appear in 1 Esd 5:8.

Josephus (*Ant.* XI.7) mentions a viceroy Bagoses and a high priest Johanan at the time of Darius. Diodorus Siculus (xvi, 47) mentions a minister Bagoas under Artaxerxes III (358–338 BCE; see Cowley 1923, 108–9).

Rehum. The name means "one upon whom there is compassion." Nehemiah 7:7 has Nehum. The name in the Bible is confined to EN, where it designates various people. The most influential one is a non-Judean official (probably a Samarian) in Ezra 4:8 who prevents the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem in Artaxerxes' time (Ezra 4:8–23).

Baanah. The name also appears in Neh 10:27. Another Baanah, in 2 Samuel 4, assassinates Saul's son. A form of this name appears in a personal seal now in Shlomo Moussaieff's collection (see Deutsch and Lemaire 2000).

B. The List of Israelites (2:2b–35)

2 [2b]The number of the men of the people of Israel: [3]Sons of Parosh: 2,172. [4]Sons of Shephatiah: 372. [5]Sons of Arah: 775. [6]Sons of Pahath-moab, of the sons of Jeshua, Joab: 2,812. [7]Sons of Elam: 1,254. [8]Sons of Zattu: 945. [9]Sons of Zaccai: 760. [10]Sons of Bani: 642. [11]Sons of Bebai: 623. [12]Sons of Azgad: 1,222. [13]Sons of Adonikam: 666. [14]Sons of Bigvai: 2,056. [15]Sons of Adin: 454. [16]Sons of Ater, of Hezekiah: 98. [17]Sons of Bezai: 323. [18]Sons of Jorah: 112. [19]Sons of Hashum: 223. [20]Sons of Gibbar: 95. [21]Sons of Bethlehem: 123. [22]Men of Netophah: 56. [23]Men of Anathoth: 128. [24]Sons of Azmaveth: 42. [25]Sons of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth: 743. [26]Sons of the Ramah and Geba: 621. [27]Men of Michmas: 122. [28]Men of Bethel and the Ai: 223. [29]Sons of Nebo: 52. [30]Sons of Magbish: 156. [31]Sons of another Elam: 1,254. [32]Sons of Harim: 320. [33]Sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono: 725. [34]Sons of Jericho: 345. [35]Sons of Senaah: 3,630.

Introduction

After identifying leaders, Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 lists Israelites, followed by priests, Levites, and other cult personnel in descending order of importance. Certain details indicate that the list combines different sources.

The list presents two forms of group identification for the Israelites: family names (Ezra 2:2b–19 or 20) and town names (2:20 or 21–35). It identifies members as "sons/descendants of" or "men of." Some family names carry discernible meaning. The size of these groups is relatively large. The names are mostly the same in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 until Ezra 2:17, from which point variants are more pronounced. The numbers are less consistent (see Allrik 1954 for possible explanation). Those of Nehemiah 7 are indicated below by parallel lines.

Of the nineteen group names in Ezra 2:3–20, ten are unique to EN, six appear in Ezra's entourage (Ezra 8), seven refer to the families of men who had married foreign wives, three are builders of Jerusalem's wall, and ten sign the communal pledge. Presumably, the comprehensive list in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 is derived in part from these other lists, but there is insufficient information to determine relation.

Ezra 2:21–35 includes groups as town members (with "men of" as well as "sons of"), which suggests a different source. Some names designate identifiable towns (esp. 2:21–28 and 2:33–34), several of which show Persian-period habitation; others are problematic (2:29–32). Importantly, most of the sites in this section fall within the

Benjaminite territory. The names thus affirm the membership of those in Benjamin as part of the reconstituted community. See the Comments (2:1–70) below.

Notes

2:2b. *The number of the men of the people of Israel* // Neh 7:7b. It is difficult to determine whether the heading refers to everyone in the list (ending with Ezra 2:64) or specifically (as Williamson [1985, 33] suggests) to the Israelites in contradistinction to priests and Levites whose names follow (2:36ff.). In either case, laypeople appear first, consistent with EN's emphasis on broad communal participation.

Ezra 2:3–19/20, concentrates on family name. Some names carry discernible meanings. The slight differences between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 often pertain to numbers, not names. The Notes below indicate parallels between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7.

number. The term can refer to a census, as in the census lists in Numbers (e.g., Num 1:1). Thus "tally" in Alter 2018.

2:3. *Sons* // Neh 7:8. See "sons" in Notes at Ezra 2:1.

of Parosh: 2,172. The first group is one of the largest and one of few to be enumerated identically in all early records (Ezra 2 // Neh 7, LXX, and 1 Esdras). The peculiar name means "flea." Members of this group also come up with Ezra (Ezra 8:3), marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:25), build Jerusalem's wall (Neh 3:25), and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:15). Parosh appears in the Bible only in EN. Forms of this name appear in material from Ugarit (see Zadok 1988) and a seal (Avigad and Sass 1997, 334).

2:4. *Shephatiah: 372* // Neh 7:9. The name, meaning "Yah has judged" or "Yah will judge," is one of the surprisingly few Yahwistic names in this list. In EN, some members of this group return with Ezra (Ezra 8:8). In Neh 11:4, the name occurs in a pedigree of the house of Judah. The name is familiar from other preexilic and postexilic texts (e.g., 2 Sam 3:4; 1 Chr 3:3, 27:16) as well as from seals (Avigad and Sass 1997, 160–62).

2:5. *Arah: 775* // Neh 7:10: *652.* Possible meanings of the name include "ox" or "traveler" (see Clines 1984, 48). In 1 Chr 7:39, the name belongs to a household in Asher's clan. Nehemiah 6:18 mentions an Arah who is related by marriage to Tobiah, Nehemiah's adversary. The numerical discrepancy between Ezra 2 (775) and Nehemiah 7 (652) can be explained as a variation of only two ancient signs for groups of numbers (Allrik 1954, 22). The formulation of the number in Ezra 2 (lit. "seven hundred and five and seventy") diverges from the usual pattern but follows the standard pattern in Nehemiah 7 (six hundred, fifty and two).

2:6. *Pahath-moab . . . 2,812* // Neh 7:11: *2,818.* In Hebrew, *paḥat-môʾāb* could mean "governor of Moab" (comparable to the "governor of Yehud" in Elephantine; see *TAD* A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30). In the Bible, *paḥat* can also mean "pit" (2 Sam 18:17). Clines (1984) suggests that the unusual name for this large group may reflect a title granted to the group's ancestors. Since Judah ruled Moab during David's and Solomon's reigns, perhaps this group "traced its ancestry back to a governor of that period" (ibid., 48). Jeremiah 40:11 mentions Judeans who escaped to Moab when Babylon attacked Judah and who returned later at Gedaliah's urging. The name could refer to these and later Judeans who settled in Moab. If so, as Laird (2016, 95) observes, Pahath-moab creates a new genealogical designation. Members of this group (unknown outside of EN) returned with Ezra (Ezra 8:4), married foreign wives (Ezra 10:30), helped build Jerusalem's wall (Neh 3:11), and signed the communal pledge (Neh 10:15 // ET 10:14).

of Jeshua, Joab. The syntax is awkward and indicates an addition for clarification. It remains uncertain whether the number refers to Jeshua and Joab family members as a subset of Pahath-moab or the reverse. The LXX follows the MT; 1 Esd 5:11 links Jeshua and Joab with the conjunction "and," which improves the grammar but still leaves the relationship uncertain. Weinberg (1992c, 54–55) holds that members of Pahath-moab belong to the house of Jeshua and Joab, "from which in the years 458/57 BCE another segment, 'the sons of Joab' broke off (Ezra 8:9)."

2:7. *Elam: 1,254* // Neh 7:12. In most biblical and extrabiblical sources, "Elam" designates a region east of the Tigris River (in today's Iran). Elamites appear in the Table of Nations (Gen 10:22). Abram in Genesis 14 fights a king of Elam. Along with Media and Persia, Elam was the core of the Persian/Achaemenid Empire, with Susa its capital city. "Elamites" would most naturally apply to people from Elam. These numerous returnees could be people who, during exile, settled in Elam and now return to Judah. One may consider modern family names like "Ashkenazy" or "Eskenazi" that are perpetuated by Jews whose ancestors at some point lived in Ashkenaz (Germany). Clines (1984, 49) suggests (on the basis of 1 Chr 8:24) "a Benjamite family living near Jerusalem at some indeterminate pre-exilic time." Note that the largest units in the list have names with no Israelite or Judaean connotations (Pahath-moab, Elam, and Parosh). Members of Elam also come with Ezra (Ezra 8:7), marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:26), and sign the pledge (Neh 10:15). Verse 31 complicates interpretation by referring to another Elam. See especially Ezra 10:2 for an influential member of this family.

2:8. *Zattu: 945* // Neh 13: *845.* No meaning can be assigned to the name, which is unique to lists in EN. Members of this family are not among those who go up with Ezra, but some marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:27) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:15). The discrepancy between the number in Ezra 2 (945) and Neh 7 (845) may be a scribal error (see Allrik 1954). First Esdras follows Ezra 2. A descendant of Zattu appears in the Q of Neh 3:20, among the builders of the wall.

2:9. *Zaccai: 760* // Neh 7:14. A slight variation in punctuation differentiates Ezra 2:9 and Neh 7:14. The name might be an abbreviation of Zechariah or a derivation from the root meaning "a pure one" (Clines 1984, 49). The name appears only in this list.

2:10. *Bani: 642* // Neh 7:15*: 648.* This name is easily confused with several names that have the same three letters (*b-n-y*) but are vocalized differently, and also with the word "sons of." In Neh 7:15 this name appears as Binui (the letter *waw* added and punctuated differently). In EN, descendants of Bani marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:29) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:15). First Esdras 5:12 follows the number in Nehemiah (648), but the spelling resembles that in Ezra 2:10. This form of the name occurs also in 2 Sam 23:36 and among the Levites in 1 Chr 6:31 and Neh 3:17.

2:11. *Bebai: 623* // Neh 7:16: *628.* The name appears only in EN. Members of this group go up with Ezra (Ezra 8:11), marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:28), and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:16). First Esdras 5:13 follows Ezra 2:11.

2:12. *Azgad: 1,222* // Neh 7:17: *2,322.* The name means "Gad is mighty" (BDB). "Gad" is a Canaanite god of fortune (see, e.g., Isa 65:11) but also a son of Zilpah, Leah's maid (Gen 30:10–11), thus an Israelite tribe. Its territory was conquered by Assyria (according to 1 Chr 5:26). Azgad appears in the Bible only in EN. It is known from extrabiblical sources such as Elephantine (*TAD* D 7.57.5, dated to the third century

BCE). Members of this group come up with Ezra (Ezra 8:12) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:16). The large size of this contingent is striking, whether we accept Ezra's 1,222 or Nehemiah's 2,322 (1 Esdras lists 1,322). The discrepancy in numbers can be explained by a scribal error or different traditions.

2:13. *Adonikam: 666* // Neh 7:18: *667.* The name means "my lord has risen" or "my lord rises." Among laypeople in the list, this name is one of few with a theophoric element (yet non-Yahwistic, using *ʾādôn,* "lord"). The name is among those who come up with Ezra (Ezra 8:13). Adonijah ("my lord is Yah") in Neh 10:17 likely refers to this name among those who sign the pledge since it appears between the same two names in this list (Bebai and Bigvai). Zadok (1988, 54) observes that Qam can be construed as a theophoric element as well, rendering "Qam is my lord." Compare to the name Ahikam, a prominent and wealthy Judean in Al Yahudu (Pearce and Wunsch 2014, 35–36).

2:14. *Bigvai: 2,056* // Neh 7:19: *2,067.* The name of this group, one of the largest in the list, appears also in the heading (Ezra 2:2). See "Bigvai" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a. Members of this group come up with Ezra (Ezra 8:14) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:17).

2:15. *Adin: 454* // Neh 7:20: *655.* The name may mean "voluptuous" (BDB 726), suggested by *ʿēden* of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15) or, as in modern Hebrew, "delicate." Members of this group come up with Ezra (Ezra 8:6) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:17). First Esdras lists 454.

2:16. *Ater, of Hezekiah: 98* // Neh 7:21. An unusual form in the list, specifying which Ater ("of Hezekiah"), either to distinguish this person (or group) from another Ater or to link the group with its ancestor Hezekiah. With only ninety-eight people (ninety-two in 1 Esdras), this group is among the five smallest (Gibbar with ninety-five, Netophah with fifty-six, Azmaveth with forty-two, and Nebo with fifty-two). Ater appears only in EN. Clines (1984, 49) suggests that it is either Neo-Babylonian or Persian. Ater and Hezekiah appear as distinct names among those who sign the community pledge (Neh 10:18). An Ater appears in the genealogy of a gatekeeper (Ezra 2:42 // Neh 7:45).

Hezekiah. Heb. *yĕḥizqîyah,* "Yah will strengthen." This well-known Yahwistic name belongs most famously to the Davidic king (727–698 BCE). A later descendant of the house of David in the postexilic era bears this name in 1 Chr 3:23. A preserved coin of unknown provenance is inscribed with "Hezekiah the governor," spelling the name as here (estimated date, 370 BCE; so Fried 2015a, 100).

2:17. *Bezai: 323* // Neh 7:23: *324.* The name is unique to EN. It may be a truncated form of Bezalel (Clines 1984, 50). Ezra 2:17 and Neh 7:23 place this name at slightly different positions in their lists. In Neh 7:22, Hashum precedes Bezai (Neh 7:23) and Hariph follows him.

From this point, the sequence of names in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 begins to diverge more. First Esdras 5:15–16 likewise departs from the MT; four additional groups precede Bezai: descendants of Kilan and Azetas, with 67 people; Azaru, with 432; Annias, with 101; and Arom (no number indicated).

2:18. *Jorah: 112* // Neh 7:24: *Hariph 112.* The name in Hebrew may relate to *yôreh,* "autumn rain." It possibly connects to Hariph in Neh 7:24, whose name could mean "winter" (*ḥōrep*), although Fried (2015a, 101) suggests "reproach." Both names appear

only once in the Hebrew Bible: Jorah here and Hariph in Neh 7:24. Each has a group of 112, as does Arsiphurith, who stands in 1 Esd 5:16 at this point. The root of the name, *y.r.h.,* also relates to "to teach" and "to shoot."

2:19. *Hashum: 223* // Neh 7:22: *328.* No meaning has been proposed for this name, unique to EN. In Neh 7:22, Hashum appears between Ater of Hezekiah and Bezai. Some from this group marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:33). In Neh 8:4, a person with this name shares the podium with Ezra at the reading of the *torah;* and in Neh 10:19, a Hashum is among those who sign the communal pledge. A variant of this name, Husham, appears in Gen 36:34 among Edomite kings.

2:20. *Gibbar: 95* // Neh 7:25: *Gibeon: 95.* Gibbar in Aramaic means "hero" (Heb. *gibbôr*). Gibbar appears only here, and it is difficult to determine whether it means a person or a town. Gibeon appears in Neh 3:7 as a place name. Gibeon is a well-known town and a district, associated in the Bible with foreigners who tricked Joshua and made a covenant with Israel even though they were Canaanites (Josh 10). Joshua 18:25 allots Gibeon, along with the Ramah and Beeroth, to Benjamin, and Josh 21:17 allots it to Aaron's descendants. The town is prominent in the monarchic period. In 1 Kgs 3:4, King Solomon offers sacrifices on its great altar.

In Chr 9:35–44, Gibeonites appear at the end of the list and are associated with temple servants, with Gibeon as a place name and possibly as a name in 1 Chr 9:35. Gibeon is usually identified as belonging to the tribe and territory of Benjamin (see traditions about Benjamin in 1 Chr 8 and 9:35–44).

Finkelstein (2018, 33–34) questions the claims that archaeological evidence shows that Gibeon (Tel el Jib) was inhabited during the Persian period. Clines (1984, 50) questions whether Gibeon is meant: "since the list of places from Bethlehem on works northward, it is not likely that the northerly town of Gibeon should head the list."

2:21. *Sons of Bethlehem: 123* // Neh 7:26: *men of Bethlehem and Netophah: 188.* The rest of this list refers primarily to towns. Bethlehem appears in EN only here and the parallel in Neh 7:26 and is one of very few Judean towns in the list—a surprising fact. Bethlehem is 8 kilometers south of Jerusalem and known to be an ancient city (mentioned already in the fourteenth century BCE Amarna letters). It is David's hometown (see, e.g., 1 Sam 16:4–13; see also Mic 5:1) and the locale for the story in the book of Ruth. According to Jer 41:17, it was a stopping ground for refugees escaping Jerusalem in 582 BCE en route to Egypt. Surveys of the site yielded but scant Persian- and Hellenistic-period evidence (two pottery rims each). Finkelstein (2011, 62–63; 2018, 37–38) concludes that beyond indicating periods of occupation, the evidence is "insufficient" for reconstructing the size of Bethlehem and the periods of its habitation. First Esdras 5:17 adds Beitarus, that is, Beitar, before Bethlehem, with 3,005. That town is not mentioned in the Bible but is known from the Hellenistic-Roman period in connection with the 132 CE Bar Kokhbah rebellion.

2:22. *Men of Netophah: 56* // Neh 7:26: *men of Bethlehem and Netophah: 188.* Nehemiah 7:26 is one person short of the combined numbers in the parallel of Ezra 2:21 and 22.

Men. For the first time in Ezra's list, "men" or "people" (*ʾanšê*) replaces "sons." The reference to *ʾanšê* intersperses with "sons of" (*bĕnê*) in Ezra 2, whereas the parallel in Nehemiah 7 is more consistent, with "men of" in 7:26–33 and "sons of" in 7:35–38. The terminology switch may signal different sources.

Netophah. In Neh 12:28 it refers to outlying villages near Jerusalem where Levites dwell, as in 1 Chr 9:16. First Chronicles 2:54 links the name with Caleb, hence a Judean lineage (2 Sam 23:28, 1 Chr 11:30). Although the site has not been located, references suggest proximity to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Lipschits (2005, 129–30) concludes that the term refers to a broad area with several settlements and small satellites.

2:23. *Men of Anathoth: 128* // Neh 7:27. Anathoth is located 4.8 kilometers north of Jerusalem in Benjamin territory. Joshua 21:18 and 1 Chr 6:45 (// ET 6:60) describe it as a Levitical town. In 1 Kgs 2:26 Anathoth is settled by a divergent priestly line. It is Jeremiah's birthplace (Jer 1:1), and in Jeremiah 32 he redeems land there to demonstrate future renewal. Members of this group sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:20 // ET 19), and the town is listed in Neh 11:32.

Archaeologists identify Ras-el-Kharubeh as Anathoth. The site shows strong Persian-period presence (E. Stern 1982, 34; Finkelstein 2011, 63). Avraham Biran excavated it in 1985 and dated 25 percent of the material to the Persian period. Finkelstein (2011, 63; 2018, 38–39, referring to the survey of Anata by Dinur and Feig 1993, 372–73) considers present-day Anata to be biblical Anathoth, a site that was surveyed without yielding Persian-period evidence.

2:24. *Sons of Azmaveth: 42* // Neh 7:28: *men of Beth-azmaveth: 42.* Azmaveth, meaning "strong is death," could refer to people (as in 2 Sam 23:31) or place (as in Neh 12:29). Beth-azmaveth means "house of Azmaveth." The town, identified with modern Hizmeh, northeast of Jerusalem (Clines 1984, 51; Finkelstein 2011, 63; 2018, 39), is never mentioned in texts about the preexilic period. A survey by Dinur and Feig (1993, 372–73) shows Persian-period remains and confirms continuous habitation from before the Neo-Babylonian period to Hellenistic times. This group is the smallest in the Israelite list.

2:25. *Sons of Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth: 743* // Neh 7:29: *men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth: 743.* These towns appear together only in this list and in Joshua. All three are Gibeonite towns according to Josh 9:17, allotted to Benjamin (Josh 18:21–28). In Josh 18:14, however, Kiriath-jearim (also identified as Kiriath-baal, "city of Baal") is included in Judah (see also below at "Kiriatharim"). Surveys of these towns show extensive population in Iron Age II, decline and weak presence in the Persian period, and increase in the Hellenistic era. First Esdras 5:19 lists 25 people for Kiriath-jearim and 749 for the other two places. It adds two groups comprising 422 people (1 Esd 5:20). The similar archaeological information for all three sites comports well with the trend in Benjamin.

Kiriatharim. As Kiriath-jearim (Neh 7:29), it means "town of forests." It is located northwest of Jerusalem and is famous for its associations with David and the ark (see 2 Sam 7:1–2). It is identified with modern Deor el-'Azar. Pottery from the site suggests sparse Persian-period population (Finkelstein 2011, 63–64; 2018, 39).

Chephirah is 8 kilometers north of Jerusalem and is identified as Khirbet el-Kafira. Surveys show "weak" Persian-period occupation (Finkelstein 2011, 64; 2018, 40).

Beeroth, meaning "wells," is identified as modern El Bireh. Surveys suggest a peak population in Iron Age II, weak presence in the Persian period, and recovery in the Hellenistic period (Finkelstein 2011, 64; 2018, 40). First Esdras 5:20 adds at this point "the Chadiasans and Ammidians," with 422.

2:26. *Sons of the Ramah and Geba: 621* // Neh 7:30: *men of the Ramah and Geba: 621.* The Ramah, meaning "the high place," is north of Jerusalem. Geba, meaning "hill," is adjacent to it. Each town appears among the Benjaminite towns in Neh 11:33 and 31. Elsewhere they appear together only in Josh 18:24–25 in Benjaminite territory. The Ramah is Samuel's home and base; David took refuge there escaping Saul (e.g., 1 Sam 19). In Jer 31:14 MT [ET 31:15] mother Rachel in the Ramah weeps for her lost children and receives a message of hope. First Samuel associates Geba with Saul (e.g., 1 Sam 13).

Geba, at the northernmost border of Benjamin, does not show Persian-period remains. Both towns, identified as er-Ram and Jaba, have been surveyed, with the Ramah showing strong presence in Iron Age II, sparse evidence in the Persian period, and recovery in the Hellenistic period (Finkelstein 2011, 65; 2018, 41–42), like other nearby Benjaminite towns.

2:27. *Men of Michmas: 122* // Neh 7:31. Michmas is located 9.6 kilometers north of Jerusalem. It appears in EN only here and among the Benjamin towns in Neh 11:31. First Samuel 13 mentions Michmas, along with Geba, as important sites in Saul's campaign against the Philistines. Archaeologists identify it with Khirbet el-Hara el-Fauqa, which was surveyed and shows strong presence in the Persian period and also in Iron Age II and the Hellenistic period (Finkelstein 2011, 65; 2018, 41–42). Even Finkelstein (2011, 66; 2018, 42), who often questions Persian-period remains, regards the evidence at Michmas as strong and better than that for any other site in the list, aside from Jericho.

2:28. *Men of Bethel and the Ai: 223* // Neh 7:32: *men of Bethel and Ai: 123.* The two towns appear together in the story of Abraham (Gen 12:8) and in the conquest narratives (e.g., Josh 8:1–29). Nehemiah 11:31 lists Ai (spelled *'ayah*) and Bethel among the Benjaminite towns.

Bethel. Bethel, meaning "house of God" or "house of El," is a well-known ancient city, with traditions as a holy place going back to Jacob (see Gen 28). It is located in the Benjamin territory (so Neh 11:31), 19 kilometers north of Jerusalem, and is associated with modern Beitin. Bethel reaches religious prominence during the time of the divided monarchy as one of the chief sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom, established as a rival to Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12:27–33). Amos prophesied there in the eighth century BCE (Amos 7).

Scholars disagree about the evidence from Persian-period Bethel. Blenkinsopp (2003, 99) suggests that Bethel "obtained a new lease on life" once Jerusalem's temple was destroyed. The Benjamin region's favored status and proximity to Mizpah (the administrative center) helped Bethel grow. He notes that Zech 7:1–7 mentions a delegation to Bethel to inquire of YHWH. While Bethel in Zechariah 7 could be translated as "house of God," rather than a specific location, it is equally plausible that this sanctuary is in Bethel. If so, it attests to a functioning cultic center in Darius's time in the late sixth century BCE (ibid., 100; see also Meyers and Meyers 1987, 382–83).

Much of the purported site of Bethel has been excavated. J. L. Kelso's report in 1968 indicates that Bethel was destroyed by the Babylonians and resettled only at the end of the Persian period (E. Stern 1982, 31). According to Kelso, archaeologists found large column bases dated to the fifth century BCE, suggesting that a monumental building had stood there. Pottery found at Bethel includes "Persian" bowls but also fifth-century BCE Attic pottery, according to Kelso's excavations in 1934–1960 (ibid.,

31). Knauf (2006) considers Bethel inhabited at the beginning of the Persian period. Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2009) disagree with Blenkinsopp (2003) and Knauf (2006). They believe Bethel flourished in the eighth century BCE, probably before the fall of the Northern Kingdom, writing, "A reevaluation of the archaeology of Bethel indicates that the site prospered throughout the Iron Age, but that it was probably almost deserted in the Babylonian and Persian periods (possibly also in the Early Iron Age IIA)" (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009, 33–48; Finkelstein 2011, 61; 2018, 35).

First Esdras 5:21 omits Ai and lists fifty-two for Baitoliō, its version of Bethel, which echoes the town of Baitoulua in the book of Judith (e.g., Jdt 6:10).

Ai. The town north of Jerusalem in Benjamin territory. It is prominent in Joshua 7–8. Finkelstein (2008, 7) identifies it with the village of Deir Dibwan, which has not been surveyed; others connect it with Khirbet el-Haiyan. Neither site yields Persian-period evidence.

2:29. *Sons of Nebo: 52* // Neh 7:33: *men of another Nebo: 52.* Although both versions of the list agree on the number, Neh 7:33 uses "men" to Ezra's "sons" and adds "another" or "the other" Nebo. Nebo can refer to a location or a person. The most famous Nebo in the Bible is the mountain east of the Jordan in Moab where Moses died (Deut 32:49). Because such a location for the postexilic community seems improbable, most scholars suggest that there was another town with this name closer to Jerusalem, possibly Nob, "a Benjaminite settlement in Neh. 11.32. . . . It may be the place called in Neh. 7.33 'the other Nebo'; 'other' could be a scribal slip . . . or perhaps a qualifier to distinguish it from the well-known Nebo in Moab (e.g., Isa. 15.2)" (Clines 1984, 51). In Ezra 10:43, Nebo appears among personal names, so it could designate family ties (so, e.g., Rudolph 1949, 9; Clines 1984, 51–52). Nob in 1 Samuel appears as a priestly town (1 Sam 21–22). First Esdras does not mention Nebo.

2:30. *Sons of Magbish: 156.* Nehemiah 7 does not mention this group. First Esdras 5:21 has a Niphish at this point, with 156 people. Magbish appears only here in the Hebrew Bible and in Neh 10:21 as a person, Magpiash, among those signing the community pledge. The name there follows Anathoth and Novai (a form of Nevo or Nebo?) and is likely a form of Magbish (the exchange of *p* and *b* is common in the Elephantine documents, as with Mibtaḥiah and Miptaḥiah). Several locations have been proposed, but none is certain (Fried 2015a, 105–6).

2:31. *Sons of another Elam: 1,254* // Neh 7:34. The author distinguishes this group from the earlier family of Elam (Ezra 2:7 // Neh 7:12), with the same number of members. See "Elam" in Notes at Ezra 2:7. In the Bible Elam appears as a family name only in postexilic texts and most likely designates a family here as well (elsewhere it refers to a kingdom eventually incorporated into the Persian Empire). Its inclusion here suggests editorial activity. Hypothetical identifications with Khirbet Beit ʿAlam in Judah or Khirbet ʿAlamit in Benjamin have been proposed (see Fried 2015a, 106). First Esdras in this location has Calalmolalus and combines this group with Ono, with 724 people.

2:32. *Sons of Harim: 320* // Neh 7:35. Identical in both versions of the list, Harim most likely is a family name here, like the same name in the priestly line (Ezra 2:39 // Neh 7:42). Aside from 1 Chr 24:8, the name appears only in EN where it refers to different individuals: wall builders (Neh 3:11), priests (Neh 7:42, 12:15), and those signing the communal pledge (Neh 10:6, 28). Some attempt to identify it as a town, Khirbet Beit ʿAlam (see Fried 2015a, 106). First Esdras omits this name.

2:33. *Sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono: 725* // Neh 7:37: *721.* The names belong to three towns at a considerable distance from Jerusalem and the other settlements mentioned in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 but close to the coastal plains. (Lod is 40 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem and about 16 kilometers east of Jaffa and the modern city of Tel Aviv.) In the Hebrew Bible, the names are unique to EN and 1 Chr 8:12. Nehemiah 11:34–35 identifies all three as Benjaminite towns. In Neh 6:2, Sanballat and Geshem suggest meeting with Nehemiah in the Ono Valley. First Chronicles 8:12 credits a Benjaminite with establishing these towns, confirming these as place names. The towns are so far west that Edelman (2005, 209, 238–39), for example, questions whether they fall within the province of Judah. Lipschits (2015, 255) contemplates that migrating Benjaminites chose these locations to distance themselves from Jerusalem's religious reforms.

Both Lod and Ono are equated with modern towns with the same names. Lod and Hadid have been excavated. Archaeologists concur that they were inhabited during Iron Age II, the Persian period, and the Hellenistic period (Finkelstein 2011, 62; 2018, 36–37). Finkelstein (2011, 66; 2018, 43) includes Ono among the towns that show strong Persian-period presence. Edelman (2005, 239–40) suggests that signs of ancient quarrying in Hadid date to the Persian period.

2:34. *Sons of Jericho: 345* // Neh 7:36. Jericho appears in Neh 7:36, before Lod, Hadid, and Ono. The town's name may have been derived from *r.y.ḥ.,* "fragrance," alluding to the scents of the district abounding with fragrant plants. The group from Jericho is the largest for any single, definite place name (or second largest if Senaah is a town; see "*Sons of Senaah*" below). People from Jericho appear again only among the builders of the wall (Neh 3:2), occupying an honorable place at the beginning of the list, after the priests. Allotted to Benjamin (Josh 18:21) and situated 24 kilometers northeast of Jerusalem near the Jordan River, Jericho is well known from Joshua as the first city the Israelites conquer (Josh 6–7).

Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the Levant and is familiar from extrabiblical sources. Excavations indicate that it was inhabited from Iron Age II through the Persian and Hellenistic periods. E. Stern (1982, 38, 203) is certain that the data confirm a settlement from the fifth- to fourth-century BCE Persian period, noting that its remains include local Persian-period pottery, imported Attic ware, and seal impressions (among them a few *yhd* and *yhwd* seal impressions, as well as some with names, such as *ʾûrîyah/yĕhûd* and *lyhwʿzr,* "belonging to *Yĕhôʿēzer,*" possibly governors). Finkelstein (2011, 66; 2018, 36) concurs that there is evidence of activity at the site but finds the data insufficient to determine intensity.

2:35. *Sons of Senaah: 3,630* // Neh 7:38: *3,930.* This group is the largest in the list. The mention of "sons" rather than "men" suggests a family, but no certainty can be reached. A site with this name is unknown in the Bible. Eusebius mentions a tower of Senaah north of Jericho, and this is where some locate the town (see Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 25).

Nehemiah 3:3 mentions descendants of Hassenaah (lit. "the Senaah") among the wall builders, after mentioning the men of Jericho; these "sons of *hassĕnāʾāh*" had sufficient resources to build the Fish Gate, with costly doors, bolts, and bars. Nehemiah 11:9 refers to a Benjaminite named Judah son of Senuah, possibly a version of the name. See also 1 Chr 9:7. As Clines (1984, 53) observes, "It is most remarkable that

the largest group of returning exiles (3,630 here, 3,930 in Neh 7:38) should belong to a village otherwise unknown in Old Testament times, or to a Benjaminite phratry rarely mentioned." Scribal error can explain the three-hundred person difference between the accounts in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 (see Allrik 1954).

C. The Priests (2:36–39)

2 [36]The priests: Sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua: 973. [37]Sons of Immer: 1,052. [38]Sons of Pashhur: 1,247. [39]Sons of Harim: 1,017.

Introduction

Four priestly families follow the list of Israelite laypeople. Since cult personnel are reckoned from highest (priests) to lowest (Solomon's servants), the list expresses descending order of importance. In this case, placing the people of Israel first (Ezra 2:3–35) emphasizes the laity's importance in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, as in Ezra 1:5 (but see 8:1–14 and 10:18–43, which begin with cult personnel).

The names and numbers of priests are identical in MT Ezra 2:36–39 and Neh 7:39–42. The same four families appear in Ezra 10:18–22, with Jeshua first, but the other three appear in different order (Immer, Harim, Pashhur). Priestly lists in EN are inconsistent. Nehemiah 12:1–7 names twenty-two priests going up with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, without reference to the other three families in Ezra 2:36–39 // Neh 7:39–42 (unless Amariah in Neh 12:2 is Immer in Ezra 2:37). Jedaiah appears twice in that list (Neh 12:6, 7). Nehemiah 11:10–14 lists three of these names (Jedaiah, Pashhur, and Immer) among families in Nehemiah's time. Jeshua's line appears to be the chief officiating priestly family in EN (see Neh 12:1–26).

The four priestly families constitute a large group of 4,289, more than 10 percent of the community (42,360 according to Ezra 2:64). EN does not link these priestly households with prominent preexilic ancestors such as Aaron and Zadok. This silence contrasts sharply with the presentation of Ezra, whose pedigree extends through the most distinguished priestly names to Aaron (7:1–5). The priestly genealogies in 1 Chronicles do not fill the lacuna because they diverge from EN's. Most importantly, 1 Chronicles does not mention Jeshua in its main priestly genealogy (see further "priests" in Notes at Ezra 1:5, "Jeshua" at Ezra 2:2a, and the Comments [2:36–39] below).

Notes

2:36. *Sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua: 973* // Neh 7:39. The LXX has "and the priests sons of Jedoua of the house of Jeshua." This family is the smallest among the priests in the list but represents the most important priestly family in EN, as is apparent from Jeshua's role in founding the temple (Ezra 3 and 5) and from Ezra 10:18–19. Nehemiah 12:1–26 traces this priestly line for the period of restoration, underscoring the lineage's prominence. The relationship between the two names here is vague, making it difficult to determine which name represents the subgroup. The present translation subsumes Jedaiah to Jeshua, as implied in Neh 12:1–7, and because in this list, Jeshua has already been designated as a leading figure. The NJPS has "the sons of Jedaiah: the house of Jeshua." The NRSV retains the ambiguity ("the descendants of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua").

Jedaiah. Heb. *yĕdaʿyāh,* meaning "Yah [YHWH] will know" or "knows." This is the only name among the priests with an explicit Yahwistic, theophoric element. It recurs in other priestly lists (Neh 7:39; 11:10; 12:6, 7, 19; 1 Chr 9:10; 24:7). Although he heads the list of priests here and may also in Neh 11:10 and 1 Chr 9:10 (where Joshua does not appear), this figure remains shadowy. In Neh 11:10, a priest Jedaiah son of Joiarib stands first in the list of priests dwelling in Jerusalem, thus occupying a position of honor in Nehemiah's time. Nehemiah 12 mentions two leading priests with that name in the days of Jeshua; one accompanies Jeshua during the return (Neh 12:6–7), and the other is Jeshua's great-grandson (Neh 12:10; 1 Chr 9:10 lists Jedaiah, Joiarib, and Jachin as the three families that first came back from Babylon). The name and forms of it also appear among the descendants of Jeshua in Neh 12:10–11, 19, 21.

Zechariah 6:10–14 reports that a Jedaiah (without a patronym) came with other men from Babylonia and brought gold and silver to make crowns (Zech 6:14). We know nothing further about these men. The name also appears in Babylonian documents (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 341).

house of Jeshua. Jeshua first appears in Ezra 2:2 as one of the leaders (see Notes at Ezra 2:2a for details). As a priest, he plays a key role in building the altar and the temple (Ezra 3–6). He is the only priest in EN, aside from Ezra, with a major role in the reconstruction. First Esdras 5:24 adds a name to Jeshua's genealogical list (and lists one person fewer in total). Members of this family marry foreign wives and consent to send them away (Ezra 10:18–19)

2:37. *Sons of Immer: 1,052* // Neh 7:40. The name may be an abbreviation of Amariah (1 Chr 5:23), meaning "Yah said." Members of this priestly family marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:20). The builder Zadok son of Immer may come from the same family (Neh 3:29). Beyond these references, this family plays no discernible role in EN. A different Immer appears in Ezra 2:59 // Neh 7:61 and Neh 11:13. In the Bible, the name Immer, like Pashhur, appears only twice outside of EN. A priest named Pashhur son of Immer is Jeremiah's opponent (Jer 20:1–6). An Immer in the priestly genealogy is appended to Jedaiah (1 Chr 9:12) and is in 1 Chr 24:14.

Amariah may be a form of Immer in Neh 10:4. Several seal and jar inscriptions without secure dating preserve the name *ʾămaryāh* or *ʾămaryāhû* (see, e.g., Avigad and Sass 1997; Fried 2015a, 109), but none of these indicates a priest.

2:38. *Sons of Pashhur: 1,247* // Neh 7:41. The name derives from Egyptian and means either "son of Horus" or "portion of Horus" (Bracke 1992). Members of this priestly family marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:22) and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:4 [NRSV 10:3]). Nehemiah 11:12 refers to a priestly Pashhur son of Malchiah, an ancestor of Adaiah. Pashhur is Jeremiah's opponent in Jer 20:1–6; see also a priest named Pashhur in Jer 21:1 and in the lineage in Jer 38:1. First Chronicles 9:12 includes Pashhur son of Malchiah in a priestly genealogy, but the priestly list in 1 Chronicles 24 does not mention him. A Pashhur son of Adaiah appears in an ostraca from Arad dated to the First Temple period (Keel and Schroer 1985, 233); see also Pashhur seals and bullae (Avigad and Sass 1997, nos. 335, 336, 618, and 619).

2:39. *Sons of Harim: 1,017* // Neh 7:42. This priestly family appears among those who marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:21) and who sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:6 [NRSV 10:5]). They are also listed as priests in Jehoiakim's time in Neh 12:15. Rehum

in Neh 12:3 may be a variant of this name. For the Israelite family (or town) with the same name, see "Sons of Harim: 320" in Notes at Ezra 2:32. The name Harim appears outside of EN only in 1 Chr 24:8, in the third position. The absence of this name from 1 Chr 9:10–13 is surprising. Keel (1986, 233) suggests that Jeroham in 1 Chr 9:12 may represent Harim.

Comments

EN presents as norms a male, hereditary priesthood that serves only the temple in Jerusalem. Except for the insistence on only one temple, these norms bear "family resemblance" to the evolved priestly patterns in Babylonia, which, by the Persian period, largely excluded women and nonhereditary members from serving as priests. EN is temple-centered, reflecting no other legitimate forms of worship aside from prayer, which, as Nehemiah 1 exemplifies, can take place anywhere. EN expects Judeans to give allegiance only to this institution. Priests are the highest cult officials. In EN, as elsewhere in the Bible, they are primarily responsible for sacrificial offerings, but also officiate in ceremonial festivities (see, e.g., Ezra 3:10).

With the demise of an indigenous monarchy, the temple in the postexilic period became the central and most complex Judean institution, propelling the priesthood to greater political, social, and economic positions. EN and Chronicles refer to priests more often than any other book except Leviticus. If we believe EN, Persian royal support flowed to the temple, including tax exemption for priests (Ezra 7:24).

The four priestly families in Ezra 2:36–39 // Neh 7:39–42 represent the most important and largest group of cult personnel. Although Jerusalem is not mentioned in the list, one expects the priests to settle there. Their number, at 4,289, is proportionately large, especially compared with the number of Levites (74). The reliability of this number, like others in this list, cannot be trusted. It exceeds what archaeologists consider the total number of inhabitants in Jerusalem during the Persian period, which studies estimate to be no more than a few hundred residents (see Finkelstein 2018, 22–27, and "Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period" in the Introduction). At best, the numbers may represent generations of priests, not those first coming back from exile. Still, as Williamson (1985, 34) observes, one would expect many priests to repatriate since they had the strongest incentive to rebuild the temple.

The only qualified priests in the Bible are the descendants of Aaron. Yet, and in contrast to Ezra (Ezra 7:1–5), none of the four priestly families is linked in EN to Aaron (although Neh 10:39 and 12:47 mention Aaronide priests). While smallest in number, Jeshua's family is the only one of these four playing a major role in EN from the beginning to the end.

Even though Jeshua lacks links with Aaron's or Zadok's lineage, even in Chronicles' genealogies, there is no sign in EN of contesting Jeshua's or his family's position. This silence deserves mention, given the conflict about legitimate priesthood and privilege in other biblical and postbiblical texts (Ezek 40:45–47 and Mal 2:1–5). The Korah rebellion in Numbers 16 reflects another challenge to priestly power or monopoly. Different sorts of conflicts arise in the Hellenistic period. EN exhibits no tension among priestly groups but curtails priestly monopoly by elevating Levites alongside the priests and by establishing the book of the *torah* alongside the temple.

A large class of priests would have meant an additional economic burden on Judah's residents. Royal tax exemption (if actual; see Ezra 7:24) would have increased the economic gap and privileged the priests, making their position attractive.

As noted, Jeshua, the most prominent priest in EN aside from Ezra, led the return and rebuilding of the temple alongside Zerubbabel. Nehemiah 12:1–26 reflects his prominence as progenitor of the leading priestly line. Nothing, however, links Jeshua with Ezra or an earlier priestly line beyond his patronym. Neither is Jeshua called a "high priest" in EN as he is in Haggai and Zechariah (Hag 1:1 and Zech 3:1). Those whom Ezra 2:36–39 // Neh 7:39–42 presents as four distinct priestly lines (Jedaiah/Jeshua, Immer, Pashhur, and Harim) appear in 1 Chronicles as representatives of two priestly families (one in 1 Chr 9:10 for Jedaiah and another in 1 Chr 9:12 for Pashhur and Immer and possibly Harim). One can conclude that priestly genealogies, and the names of these four families, do not reflect a stable tradition. It is hazardous to build too much on them in attempting to construct the history of the priesthood.

Williamson (1979) suggests that Ezra 2:36–39 stands near the beginning of the long process that leads to the division of the priesthood into twenty-four priestly courses.

In the Persian period, priests consistently appear in the most important roles, alongside the governor, with only the Persian kings as superior. This picture contrasts with biblical depictions of the monarchic period when the royal court and the prophets eclipse the temple and the priests (for the complex history of the priesthood and its relation to the Levites, see Knoppers 1999; Rooke 2000; Schaper 2000; Hunt 2006; Fulton 2015; priests and Levites in EN will be discussed in a future volume at Neh 12:1–26).

D. Other Cult Personnel (2:40–58)

2 [40]The Levites: Sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah: 74, [41]the singers, sons of Asaph: 128. [42]Sons of the gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai, in all: 139.

[43]The Netinim: Sons of Ziha, sons of Hasupha, sons of Tabbaoth, [44]sons of Keros, sons of Siaha, sons of Padon, [45]sons of Lebanah, sons of Hagabah, sons of Akkub, [46]sons of Hagab, sons of Shamlai, sons of Hanan, [47]sons of Giddel, sons of Gahar, sons of Reaiah, [48]sons of Rezin, sons of Nekoda, sons of Gazzam, [49]sons of Uzza, sons of Paseah, sons of Besai, [50]sons of Asnah, sons of Meunim, sons of Nephisim, [51]sons of Bakbuk, sons of Hakupha, sons of Harhur, [52]sons of Bazluth, sons of Mehida, sons of Harsha, [53]sons of Barkos, sons of Sisera, sons of Temah, [54]sons of Neziah, sons of Hatipha.

[55]The sons of Solomon's servants: Sons of Sotai, sons of Hassophereth, sons of Peruda, [56]sons of Jaalah, sons of Darkon, sons of Giddel, [57]sons of Shephatiah, sons of Hattil, sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, sons of Ami.

[58]All the Netinim and the sons of Solomon's servants: 392.

Introduction and Structure

Five groups of cult personnel follow the priests in descending order of status: Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Netinim, and Solomon's servants, with a total of 733 in Ezra 2 and 752 in Nehemiah 7. Members of these families assist the priests in some fashion, but

aside from the singers, their specific roles remain obscure. Of these groups, only the Levites feature prominently in EN. While they serve alongside priests, their function extends beyond the temple. Their small number here is puzzling.

The Netinim remain one of the most obscure groups of cult personnel, confined almost exclusively to EN. Grouped here with Solomon's servants, they rank low and were most likely entrusted with menial work; however, they possess status and privileges not evident for Solomon's servants.

The thirty-five families of Netinim in Ezra 2 (thirty-two in Nehemiah) comprise a sizable contingent of 392 members with Solomon's servants (Ezra 2:58, see Notes below; 372 in 1 Esdras). The names show some variations between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 (often a plene form in Ezra, as in Ezra 2:43) and in the LXX and 1 Esdras 5 (which lists forty). The relatively large proportion of given names of Netinim is explicable when we assume foreign descent and gradual addition to the community of unrelated individuals.

The Netinim's names are a mixture of Semitic (e.g., Hanan in Ezra 2:46) and non-Semitic, such as Sisera in Ezra 2:53 (see Judg 4–5). Some suggest professions (e.g., Harsha, "smithy," in 2:52) or a nickname (Akkub, "crooked," in 2:45; Bakbuk, "flask," in 2:51; or Tabbaoth, "rings," in 2:43). Most are unique and yield no information.

The ten families of Solomon's servants or slaves (seventeen in 1 Esd 5:3–35) appear last in this list of cultic personnel. They are differentiated from ordinary servants or slaves mentioned in Ezra 2:65 // Neh 7:67. Although grouped here with the Netinim, Solomon's servants do not appear in other lists of cult personnel such as in Ezra 2:70; 7:7, 24; Neh 7:72; 10:29, but they are mentioned in Neh 11:3. They do not receive tax exemption granted to Netinim or appear as signatories in Neh 10:29. These omissions confirm that they were not freed or people with means and were probably responsible for the most menial cultic tasks. Three names in a feminine form (Hassophereth in Ezra 2:55, Jaalah in 2:56, and Pochereth-hazzebaim in 2:57) point possibly to families named after female ancestors or place names. The longer list of Solomon's servants in 1 Esdras, like that of Netinim, illustrates the tendency for lists to be supplemented over time.

This list of Ezra 2:40–58 is structured as follows:

1. Levites, 74 (Ezra 2:40 // Neh 7:43)
2. Singers, 128 // 148 (Ezra 2:41 // Neh 7:44)
3. Gatekeepers, 139 (Ezra 2:42 // Neh 7:45)
4. Netinim (Ezra 2:43–54 // Neh 7:46–56)
5. Solomon's servants (Ezra 2:55–57 // Neh 7:57–59)
6. Total of Netinim and Solomon's servants, 392 (Ezra 2:58 // Neh 7:60)

Notes

2:40. *The Levites* // Neh 7:43. These are cult functionaries below priests, especially prominent in EN. See "the Levites" in Notes at Ezra 1:5.

Sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah: 74. As with Jeshua's family (Ezra 2:36), determining who heads the family and who represents a subgroup is difficult. Moreover, EN elsewhere combines names in this verse differently. Jeshua and Kadmiel appear together again, but the relationship between them and other names is inconsis-

tent. The parallel in Neh 7:43 has four names, with the word *bĕnê* ("sons" in Ezra 2:40) treated as a name, and with the name Hodva (not Hodaviah as in Ezra 2:40). The possibility that *bĕnê* was regarded as a name is reinforced by Ezra 10:38 and Neh 9:4, 9:5 (following Jeshua and Kadmiel), and 12:8, where forms of *b.n.y.* or *b.n.w.* appear as a name. The LXX, however, has "sons of" and 1 Esd 5:26 has "the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel and Bannas and Sudias: 74."

The present translation assumes (with Pseudo Ibn Ezra) that Hodaviah is Jeshua's and Kadmiel's ancestor in Ezra 2. Ezra 3:9 buttresses this conclusion by listing Jeshua and Kadmiel as sons of Judah (*yĕhûdāh*), a possible form of Hodaviah (*hōdawyāh*). The NJPS translates Neh 7:43 as "the Levites: the sons of Jeshua: Kadmiel, the sons of Hodeieh—74." Williamson (1985, 22) has "the Levites: the family of Jeshua and Kadmiel, namely the family of Hodaviah." The variations show uncertainties about this group's composition at this stage. Fried (2015a, 111) suggests that the Bani in Neh 7:43 is a contraction of Beniah or Beniyahu, pointing to known seals with that elongated name, one from the city of David dated to just before its destruction.

Jeshua. The name is common in EN for both priests and Levites. A Levite with this name supervises the founding of the temple (Ezra 3:9). Another is the ancestor of Jozabad, recruited by Ezra (8:33). A Levite Jeshua is in the entourage of Jeshua son of Jozadak in Neh 12:8, and a Jeshua son of Kadmiel appears in Neh 12:24 at the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak. A Levite Jeshua also helps lead the communal prayer in Neh 9:4–5 and signs the communal pledge (Neh 10:10). Some of these references are decades apart, which precludes their being the same individual.

Kadmiel. This name appears only in EN. With Jeshua, Kadmiel is a leading Levite supervising the temple's founding (Ezra 3:9) and is among the entourage of Jeshua son of Jozadak in Neh 12:8. The name also appears among the Levites who lead the communal prayer in Neh 9:4–5 and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:10). A Levite with this name is listed as the father of a Jeshua in Neh 12:24, at the time of Joiakim, son of Jeshua, son of Jozadak.

Hodaviah. The name appears only here in EN, but versions of it can be found elsewhere. Hodeieh in Neh 7:43 is clearly a variant, as is most likely Judah in Ezra 3:9, an ancestor of Kadmiel and probably Jeshua. A Levite named Hodiah signs the pledge in Neh 10:11 and 14. Outside EN the name refers to non-Levites.

74. This number for Levites is one of the smallest in the list of Ezra 2. The disproportion between the 74 Levites and the 4,289 priests is remarkable, given the tasks assigned to Levites in EN. The small number of Levites in Ezra 2 contrasts sharply with numbers in 1 Chronicles, where Levites number in the tens of thousands (38,000 Levites in David's time in 1 Chr 23:3). Despite this small number in Ezra 2, Levites play a major role in EN alongside priests but with added responsibilities, such as teaching and leading worship (Neh 9:4–5). Some scholars suppose that Levites were not really exiled and therefore did not need to return. Others hypothesize that they suffered greatly during the destruction of 722 BCE and 586 BCE so that only a few survived (so Fried 2015a, 112). See Ezra at 8:15–20 where Ezra recruits Levites.

2:41. *The singers, sons of Asaph: 128* // Neh 7:44: *148.* Temple singers and gatekeepers are an integral part of the cult in EN but not as prominent as the Levites. These temple personnel do not appear in accounts about Solomon's temple in Kings, despite the elaborate details about the temple and its inauguration in 1 Kings 7–8. Singers feature

prominently in EN's dedication ceremonies as cult leaders (see, e.g., Neh 12:27–43). They appear as a distinct group among those who come with Ezra (Ezra 7), marry foreign wives (Ezra 10), and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:29). However, very few of them are named in the narrative. The introduction in Ezra 1:5 does not mention them. Their mention here is one of several indications that the list was expanded. With this list, EN presents a highly developed cult.

singers. Heb. *mĕšōrĕrîm.* This term for singers, related to *šîr,* "song," is confined to EN and Chronicles. Positioned second to the Levites, the singers are distinguished from the two hundred male singers and female singers (*mĕšōrĕrîm* and *mĕšōrĕrôt*) in Ezra 2:65 // Neh 7:67 and other kinds of singers (*šārîm* and *šārôt*) in Eccl 2:8 and 2 Chr 35:25. First Esdras 5:27 calls them "temple singers" (*hieropsaltai*), in contrast to the LXX of Ezra 2:41, which simply has *adontes.* Alter's (2018) translation, "choristers," nicely articulates the singers' function. The singers' presence throughout EN foregrounds music's role in temple worship and highlights the celebratory aspects of cult activities. Singers are associated with songs of praise and thanksgiving and are best understood as musicians, not merely as singers. Their task may have extended to composing, as some psalm superscriptions suggest (e.g., Ps 50:1). The modern Hebrew use of *mĕšōrĕrîm* as "poets" captures a dimension of the term.

Music was part of temple worship in the ancient world. Early Mesopotamian records, such as the "Music Stele" of King Gudea in the Louvre, feature musicians (King Gudea reigned in the late twenty-second century BCE). Grand Babylonian temples, to which exiled Judeans would have been exposed, employed musicians of all sorts (on the Babylonian priesthood, see Waerzeggers 2011a, 59–70). Music, apparently, was part of worship in ancient Israel, as when Amos denounces his audience: "Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps" (Amos 5:23). By the Persian period, music in worship seems to have grown in importance, perhaps because religious celebrations were the only Judean festive events under imperial rule.

Women feature prominently in the ancient world and the Bible as composers and song leaders (see the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 and the Song of Deborah in Judges 5; and 1 Sam 18:6–7, where singing women welcome the warrior). Although women singers appear in EN (Ezra 2:65 // Neh 7:67), those in Ezra 2:41 // Neh 7:44, and throughout EN, are likely males. The only sign of female temple singers comes from 1 Chr 25:4–7, where the daughters of Heman are trained musicians along with their brothers.

The singers typically appear with the gatekeepers in EN, following the Levites. Some texts imply a subgroup among the Levites, designated for a special task (Neh 11:22, 12:27), a view found in Chronicles as well (1 Chr 23:3–5). In Neh 12:27 the Levites are summoned to lead "with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres."

Like the Levites, the singers are exempt from royal tax in Ezra 7:24 and entitled to tithes (Neh 13:10). The pledge in Nehemiah 10 mentions them with "the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers," etc. (Neh 10:29).

Oddly, Uzzi, a singer in Neh 11:22–23, is an overseer or supervisor of Levites (not their subordinate) and is in charge of the work on the house of God. Pseudo Rashi supposes it means that he oversaw expenditures, whereas Malbim suggests a reference to their specific song schedule. Nehemiah 12:45–47 specifies that David authorized their role as singers of praise and thanks, a likely allusion to the Psalms. According to

Neh 12:28–29, singers had settled outside Jerusalem and were brought back for the dedication of Jerusalem's wall. Their number in 1 Esd 5:27 corresponds with that in Ezra 2.

Asaph. This common name is most prominent in the superscriptions of twelve psalms (Pss 50 and 73–83). Both EN and Chronicles repeatedly pair Asaph with David when depicting cult origins and practices (e.g., Neh 12:46, 1 Chr 16:7, 1 Chr 25:1). In Ezra 3:10, Levites, descendants of Asaph, lead the liturgy at the founding of the temple. While EN mentions only the family of Asaph as temple singers, Chronicles identifies three such families, Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman (1 Chr 25:1), and adds prophecy to their "skill set," to be accompanied by lyres, harps, and cymbals. It refers to Asaph as a prophet and seer (1 Chr 25:1–2 and 2 Chr 29:30). This language further connects singers' role with composing poetry or reciting verse like the classical prophets.

128. Nehemiah 7:44 has 148. This can be explained by a difference of a single stroke. First Esdras 5:27 follows Ezra 2.

2:42. *Sons of the gatekeepers: sons of Shallum, sons of Ater, sons of Talmon, sons of Akkub, sons of Hatita, sons of Shobai, in all: 139* // Neh 7:45: *128.* Whereas singers trace to the single name Asaph in EN, gatekeepers belong to six families with Semitic and non-Semitic names, none with an obvious theophoric element. Two (Hatita and Shobai) occur only here and in the parallel in Neh 7:45. Ater is mentioned elsewhere only in Ezra 2:16 // Neh 7:21. Three (Shallum, Akkub, and Talmon) appear in 1 Chr 9:17. The list is virtually identical in Ezra and Nehemiah 7 except for the numbers. First Esdras 5:28 matches Ezra with 139.

gatekeepers. Like the singers, gatekeepers appear primarily in EN and Chronicles (fourteen times in EN; seventeen in Chronicles; two in 2 Kgs 7:10–11). Unlike the singers' roles, however, gatekeepers' roles are not "cultic," but more military: to ensure the safety of sensitive areas like the entrance to the city (Neh 7:3) or the temple chambers that stored precious items (Neh 13:5). When classified with cult personnel, these activities are endowed with ceremonial and ritual significance. Greek translations suggest different connotations for "gatekeeper." The LXX uses *pylōron,* which suggests maintenance, whereas 1 Esd 5:28 uses *thyrōroi,* which connotes porters.

Gatekeepers go up with Ezra (Ezra 7:7), marry foreign wives (Ezra 10:24), and sign the communal pledge (Neh 10:29). They are summoned to duty in Neh 7:7 when Jerusalem's wall is restored. Like the singers, gatekeepers in EN follow David's and Solomon's instructions and may receive portions from communal offerings (Neh 12:45–47). Once the wall is built and Jerusalem is repopulated, 172 of them consent to live in the city (Neh 11:19). Like singers, gatekeepers are a distinct group in EN but are subsumed under Levites at times in Chronicles (see 1 Chr 23:5). First Chronicles 9:17–28 devotes more space to them than to other cult personnel and claims that David and Samuel appointed them for their trustworthiness (1 Chr 9:22).

Shallum. This Semitic name is common in both preexilic and postexilic texts (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 15:15). In 1 Chr 9:17, Shallum heads the group of gatekeepers composed of Akub, Talmon, and Ahiman. According to 1 Chr 9:22, David and Samuel appoint Shallum with the other gatekeepers. Jeremiah 35:4 mentions a keeper of the threshold whose ancestor is Shallum. Several men named Shallum appear in Elephantine and in the Aramaic ostraca from Arad, further indicating the name's popularity in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (see, e.g., *TAD* C 3.15; Eph'al and Naveh 1996, no. 139).

Ater. This name appears only in EN, where the name also belongs to an Israelite family (see Notes at Ezra 2:16).

Talmon. This name appears only in EN and Chronicles, always for gatekeepers; see Neh 11:19, 12:25, and 1 Chr 9:17, which closely parallels Nehemiah 11.

Akkub. The name appears in several lists, including that of the Netinim (Ezra 2:45). Heb. *ʿaqqûb* relates to "crooked" or "heel" (see, e.g., Isa 40:4). It resembles *yaʿăqōb,* Jacob, but it is not clear whether it is a late form of Jacob. The name appears also in Neh 11:19, 12:25, and 1 Chr 9:17. In Neh 8:7 it refers to one who stands by Ezra at the *torah* reading ceremony. In 1 Chr 3:24 it refers to a descendant of the house of Pedaiah, thus a relative of Zerubbabel.

Hatita. This name appears only in this list.

Shobai. The name echoes the Hebrew verb *š.w.b.,* "to return," but appears in the Bible only in the list of builders. It is attested in a limited number of extrabiblical sources but without shedding light on the origin or identity of this family (see *TAD* D 8.12.5). Fried (2015a, 119) mentions a recently uncovered seal with the name, possibly referring to the governor of Ammon in the late sixth or early fifth century BCE.

2:43. *The Netinim* // Neh 7:46. Heb. *nětînîm,* from the root *n.t.n.,* "to give." This term, also translated as "temple servants" (see the NJPS and NRSV) or "temple laborer" (Alter 2018), designates low-level cult personnel whose history and function remain obscure. The LXX transliterates the term as *nathinaioi* in Ezra 2:43 and *nathinim* in Neh 7:46, whereas 1 Esd 5:29 has "temple servants" (*hierodouloi*). They appear only in EN and once in 1 Chronicles (9:2), where the LXX translates it as *hoi dedomenoi,* "the given ones." Ezra 8:20 has the only biblical explanation of their origin, stating that David and the chiefs gave (*nātan*) Netinim to "the service of the Levites."

Numbers 8:16 and 18:6 offer hints: forms of *n.t.n.* as a passive participle, *nětûnîm,* refer to Levites in the service of the Aaronide priests and of God: "For they are wholly given [*nětūnîm nětūnîm (sic)*] unto me" (Num 8:16) and "to you they are given [*nětūnîm*] as a gift [*mattānâ*] for the Lord" (Num 18:6). One can conclude that as Levites were given to the service of priests and God, Netinim were given to the Levites. The Netinim were most likely foreign, at least originally, entrusted to help the Levites, either by choice or by being dedicated by others.

Ezra in Ezra 8:20 recruits 220 Netinim along with the 38 Levites to join his caravan from Babylon. In both Ezra 2 and 8, the number of Netinim greatly exceeds the number of Levites (the proportion here is uncertain since Netinim are counted together with Solomon's servants; see Ezra 2:58).

Numbers 31:25–30 designates a portion of captives for temple service. First Kings 9:20–22 speaks of subjugating the remaining Canaanites "to this very day." Ezekiel criticizes foreign functionaries at the temple in his attack on the Levites (Ezek 44:6–14), which may reflect the employment of groups analogous to the Netinim or Solomon's servants. That Ezra recruits Netinim in Babylonia further suggests foreign origin. Several foreign names of Netinim (such as Rezin in Ezra 2:48 or Sisera in 2:53) add to this conclusion. First Kings 9:20 suggests this possibility (since Solomon yoked foreigners as corvée). They may have been similar to Babylonian *širkus,* "institutional dependents whose limited freedom, in comparison with free citizens of a Babylonian town, was the result of their social subordination to an institutional temple household" (Kleber 2011, 101).

Rabbinic sources, however, praise the devotion of the Netinim (*Genesis Rabbah* 71.4); they also note that Netinim do not appear among the intermarried. The rabbis identified Netinim with the Gibeonites and (later) with proselytes (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 66–67). Pseudo Rashi identifies them as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" in Deut 29:9–11, or as the Gibeonites (Josh 9:21, 27). Some modern scholars concur (see, e.g., Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 31–32 [Kochman]; Blenkinsopp 1988, 90; Fried 2015a, 119). According to Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 32), mentioning Netinim in the lists signals their changed status from slaves *of* the temple to those who serve *in* the temple.

In her seminal article on the relationship between EN and Chronicles, Japhet (1968) shows how Netinim (and Solomon's servants) constitute yet another reason to doubt the common authorship of the two books. Given Chronicles' portrait of David as cult founder, one would expect "an explicit mention of the Nethinim, their origin and functions, in Chr.," since David appoints them according to Ezra 8:20; but surprisingly, "there are no Nethinim in Chr." (ibid., 352).

Like priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, Netinim are exempt in Ezra 7:24 from royal taxes and are among the signatories to the pledge (Neh 10:29). This suggests that they were freed people (see, e.g., Levine 1963), but reckoning them together with Solomon's servants (who do not share these privileges) in Ezra 2:58 communicates the proximity of their status to those lower levels of functionaries. According to Neh 3:26, the Netinim lived on the Ophel.

With thirty-five heads of families (thirty-two in Nehemiah 7), the Netinim are divided into more groups than any other group in the list. The names show numerous albeit minor variations in spelling, in contrast to the fairly consistent list of other cult functionaries. First Esdras lists forty names.

Ziha // Neh 7:46. Nehemiah 11:21 lists a Ziha as one of the two people in charge of the Netinim. The uniqueness of the name in the Bible and its leading position in this list suggest that this is the same person. First Esdras 5:29, intriguingly, has Esau.

Hasupha. The root verb forming this name means "to uncover" or "to bare" (see, e.g., Jer 49:10). Blenkinsopp (1988) suggests "speedy."

Tabbaoth. The word means "rings" (see, e.g., Exod 28:26).

2:44. *Keros* // Neh 7:47: *Keiros.* The name could mean "clasp" (see, e.g., Exod 36:13). A form of this name appears as KRSI among the ostraca from Arad, dated toward the end of the First Temple period. The ostraca also mention "the house of YHWH" (Lemaire 1977, 182–83; Levine 1969; Williamson 1985, 36; and Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 31).

Siaha. Nehemiah: *Sia.* Fried (2015a, 123) contemplates a Persian origin related to the word "happiness."

Padon. The name suggests a Semitic origin related to Heb. *p.d.h.,* "redeem." A Pedayahu appears in ostraca from Arad, dated in the seventh century BCE (Aharoni 1981, no. 49).

2:45. *Lebanah, sons of Hagabah, sons of Akkub* // Neh 7:48: *Lebana, of Hagaba, of Shalmai.*

Lebanah. The letters *l.b.n.* spell both "brick" (in Gen 11:3) and a feminine form of "white" (in Lev 13:10) or "moon." Blenkinsopp (1988, 91) considers "albino." It also recalls Laban, father of Leah and Rachel in Genesis.

Hagabah. The word, here and for another Hagab in Ezra 2:46, relates to "grasshopper" (see, e.g., Num 13:33). Forms of this name appear in extrabiblical sources such as seals and the Lachish letters. See Notes at Ezra 2:46.

Akkub. This name is not in Neh 7:48. It is identical with that of a gatekeeper in Ezra 2:42 // Neh 7:45. See Notes at Ezra 2:42. This repetition and the fact that it does not appear among the Netinim in Neh 7:48 suggests textual corruption.

2:46. *Hagab, . . . Shamlai, . . . Hanan* // Neh 7:49: *Hanan, . . . Gidel, . . . Gahar.*

Hagab. The word means "grasshopper" (see, e.g., Num 13:33). The name resembles Hagabah in Ezra 2:45. This similarity, and the fact that it does not appear in the parallel in Nehemiah 7, suggests textual corruption. See Notes at Ezra 2:45. It appears also on an ostracon from Lachish dated toward the end of the First Temple period (Lemaire 1977, 96). Fried (2015a, 122) mentions a seventh-century BCE seal with an engraved image with LHGB ("to Hagab") found in Jerusalem.

Shamlai. Nehemiah 7:48 has Shalmai, which links the term to *š.l.m.,* "whole" or "peace." Forms of this name are common in the Bible (see, e.g., Jer 37:3) and Elephantine, dating from the fifth to third centuries BCE (see, e.g., *TAD* D 2.1.19, D 9.10.1).

Hanan // Neh 7:49. The name, one of the few clear Hebrew names among the Netinim, means "had compassion." It is common in EN and elsewhere for people in different groups (see, e.g., Neh 8:7 among those accompanying Ezra). It also appears among those who live in Gibeon in 1 Chr 8:38 and 9:44, which leads Fried (2015a, 122) to claim unpersuasively that these references are "belying the assertion that the *n'tinim* were descendants of the Gibeonites."

2:47. *Giddel* // Neh 7:49. The verb *g.d.l.* means "he made [something] grow." The name appears also among Solomon's servants (Ezra 2:56 // Neh 7:58). A sixth-century BCE seal impression bears this name (Avigad and Sass 1997, no. 174).

Gahar. Only known from this list, the name does not offer obvious meanings.

Reaiah // Neh 7:50. The verb *r.ʾ.h.* means "to see." With the suffix *iah,* it is one of the few Yahwistic names in the list, known as well from Judah's and Reuben's genealogies in 1 Chr 4:2 and 5:5.

2:48. *Rezin* // Neh 7:50. In 2 Kings 15–16 and Isa 7:4–8, this name designates the king of Aram, whose army threatens Jerusalem in the late eighth century BCE.

Nekoda. The name appears also in Ezra 2:60 // Neh 7:62, among those who cannot prove their ancestry. The word relates to "speckled" (as in Gen 30:33). Blenkinsopp (1988, 91) suggests "pockmarked." Fried (2015a, 123) considers Persian influence.

Gazzam // Neh 7:51. The name appears only here. A verb in this form refers to devouring locusts in Joel 1:4 and 2:25, and Amos 4:9.

2:49. *Uzza* // Neh 7:51. In 2 Samuel 6, a man with this name is struck dead by God when he tries to steady the ark en route to Jerusalem. The name also appears in the Benjamin genealogy in 1 Chr 8:7. With the Yahwistic suffix, it is also the name of the Judean king Uzziah (Isa 6:1).

Paseah. The word suggests "limping." The verb, from which Passover is derived, refers to "leaping over" something. As a name it appears again in EN only in Neh 3:6 and in 1 Chr 4:12.

Besai. Blenkinsopp (1988, 90) considers a Babylonian origin for this name (found in the Bible only here) because a form of it appears as a woman's name in Babylonian records. Fried (2015a, 124) mentions a Judean seal with the name.

2:50. *Asnah.* This name does not appear in Nehemiah 7. It resembles the name of Joseph's wife Asenat.

Meunim. Q; the K has Meinim, but Neh 7:52 has Meunim instead. In 1 Chr 4:41, Meunim, with the same Q and K forms as here, refers to tent dwellers, presumably shepherds of a nomadic group, at the time of King Hezekiah. The descendants of Simeon dispossess them. They are enemies of Israel in 2 Chr 26:7 during King Uzziah's reign, together with the Philistines and Arabs. Reversing the first two letters one gets "Ammonites," who, in 2 Chr 26:7–8, are mentioned next.

Nephisim. K; the Q has Nephusim. Nehemiah 7:52 K has Nephushesim, and Q as Nephishesim. In 1 Chr 5:19, the Israelite tribes east of the Jordan vanquish Naphish and settle there. The associations of the name resemble those of the Meunim listed before.

2:51. *Bakbuk* // Neh 7:53. The word means "flask." Blenkinsopp (1988, 91) suggests "flask-shaped." In 1 Kgs 14:3 the noun refers to a container of honey. In Jer 19:1, 10 it refers to the earthen flask that symbolizes Judah's fate. Nehemiah 11:17, 12:9, and 12:25 mention a Babukiah. Fried (2015a, 125) notes a Persian name Bakapuksa in the Persepolis tablets and Behistun Inscription as possibly related.

Hakupha. The name is obscure and unique to the list. Zadok (1988, 113) contemplates an Arabic root meaning "bent" or "twisted."

Harhur. The name is confined to this list but appears for an Egyptian in Elephantine documents (see *TAD* C 3.4.7).

2:52. *Bazluth* // Neh 7:54: *Bazlith.* The noun *b.z.l.* means "onion"; however, a related name, Bezalel (Exod 35–40), implies "in the shadow of El/God," with the *b* regarded as prefix "in" to *z.l.,* which means "shadow." A bowl from Arad, possibly from the late eighth or early seventh century BCE, has the name BZL (so Aharoni 1981, 81, no. 49).

Mehida. The name appears only in this list. Its meaning is obscure. Zadok (1980, 114) suggests an Arabic source meaning "decline" or "turn aside."

Harsha. The word typically relates to stonecutters, as in Exod 28:11 and 1 Chr 22:15. It is a "smithy" or "engravers" in 1 Sam 13:19. Blenkinsopp's (1988, 91) "taciturn" or "mute," as in the rabbinic sources (b. Qidd. 70a), is also suggestive. It is possibly a nickname or title based on profession, such as "stonecutter" or "smithy." Most important is the reference to Tel-harsha in Ezra 2:59, where it is a location.

2:53. *Barkos* // Neh 7:55. This Edomite name means "son of Kos," the Edomite deity, attested in an ostracon from Arad (Aharoni 1981, 52, no. 26), dated to the beginning of the sixth century BCE.

Sisera. The name of the famed enemy general whom Jael kills in Judges 4. It appears nowhere else.

Temah. The name is unique to the list. Reckoned as a verb, it forms you/she "erase" or "blot out" (from the root *m.ḥ.h.,* "erase"). Nehemiah uses the verb in his plea to God and call to remembrance (Neh 13:14).

2:54. *Neziah* // Neh 7:56. The name is unique to the list. The root, *n.ṣ.ḥ.,* relates to "eternal," as in Isa 13:20, and to "supervise" in Ezra 3:8, where Levites supervise the building activities.

Hatipha. The name is unique to the list. The root *ḥ.ṭ.p.* means "to seize" or "to grab." Blenkinsopp (1988, 91) suggests "seized," possibly as a prisoner of war. The name could imply "kidnapped."

2:55. *Solomon's servants* // Neh 7:57. Heb. *ʿabdêi šĕlōmōh,* which the LXX transliterates as Abdeselma in Ezra 2:55 but has *doulon* in Neh 7:57; 1 Esd 5:33 uses *pais,* meaning "slave," distinct from the more honorific word for servant, *doulos,* that the LXX employs for Neh 7:57.

As slaves or servants, these workers most likely were foreign. Traditional explanations of their origin rely on 1 Kgs 9:20–21, when Solomon made the remnant of Canaanite nations in the land into a "slave force" (*mas ʿōbēd,* in 1 Kgs 9:21). The addition in 1 Kings of "to this day" indicates continuity (see, e.g., Japhet 1968, 352). Historically, they could have been a remnant of slaves acquired in wars but also slaves donated to temple service as gifts or in fulfillment of vows. Such practice was common in the ancient world. Levine (1963) is in a minority when he supposes that they are Israelite officials supervising foreigners.

The ten families bear both Semitic and non-Semitic names. Apart from Shephatiah and Giddel, none appears elsewhere in the Bible. Variations from Nehemiah 7 are minor.

Sotai // Neh 7:57. The name is unique to the list and absent from 1 Esdras.

Hassophereth // Neh 5:57: *Sophereth.* The word means "the female scribe" ("a female scribe" in Neh 7:57). The LXX and 1 Esd 5:33 transliterate this as a name. The Hebrew may refer to a guild of scribes or to those descended from a guild. Josephus mentions scribes as temple functionaries in his version of Ezra 7:24 (*Ant.* XI.5.1). Pseudo Ibn Ezra considers a title for a woman. If so, the reference is to a class descended from a female scribe. Female scribes are known in Babylonia (see, e.g., Eskenazi 1992c; Meier 1991). Associating a family with a female ancestor occurs in Ezra 2:61 // Neh 7:63 in the case of Barzillai's daughters. The claim that the feminine form is common in descriptions of a class lacks evidence (the sole example cited, Qohelet, does not support this view); nonetheless, most scholars suppose either a name or a class without reference to gender (e.g., Fried 2015a, 127).

Peruda. Perida in Neh 7:57 and 1 Esd 5:33. The name, unique to the list, may relate to the Hebrew *pered,* "mule" (1 Kgs 18:5) or the verb *p.r.d.,* "to separate" (Gen 13:14).

2:56. *Jaalah* // Neh 7:58. The name suggests a female mountain goat in Arabic and in Zadok's (1980, 100, 115) opinion is an Arabic-Edomite name. It is unique to the list but resembles Jael in Judges 4–5. One might consider a family named after its female ancestor.

Darkon. The name is unique to the list. Suggested meanings from *d.q.r.,* "to pierce" (so Zadok 1980, 115), are unconvincing, even though such a root is common in Semitic names.

Giddel. See Notes at Ezra 2:47, where the name appears among the Netinim.

2:57. *Shephatiah* // Neh 7:59. This rare Yahwistic name among Solomon's servants means either "Yah judged" or "Yah judges." In Ezra 2:4 // Neh 7:9 it names a family with 372 members.

Pochereth-hazzebaim. Blenkinsopp (1988, 91) translates this as "gazelle hunter," since *zebaim* can mean "gazelles" (as in 2 Sam 2:18). Zebaim is a place name in Gen 14:8. The feminine form of Pochereth has been taken to mean an occupation, but reference to a female ancestor cannot be excluded.

Ami // Neh 7:59: *Amon.* Ami appears only in Ezra's list. Amon is attested elsewhere. The root *ʾ.m.n.* relates to support or caregiving, as in Num 11:12, or "craftsmen," as

in Jer 52:15. As a name it belongs to a king of Judah in the late seventh century BCE (2 Kgs 21:18) and an official (1 Kgs 22:26).

2:58. *All the Netinim and the sons of Solomon's servants: 392 //* Neh 7:60. First Esdras has 372. The number is larger than that of the Levites (74), singers (128), and gatekeepers (139). Combining the groups underscores some common roles as low-status cult personnel (see the Introduction to "Other Cult Personnel" above).

E. Cases of the Undocumented (2:59–63)

2 [59]And these are the ones going up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, Immer, who were unable to tell their paternal household and their seed whether they are of Israel: [60]Sons of Delaiah, sons of Tobiah, sons of Nekoda: 652. [61]And of the sons of the priests: Sons of Habaiah, sons of Hakkoz, sons of Barzillai who had taken from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name. [62]These, those registering, sought their written document and they were not found, and they were reckoned tainted with respect to the priesthood. [63]And the *Tirshata* said to them that they should not eat of the holy of holies until there should rise a priest for the Urim and Thummim.

Introduction

This short paragraph about "undocumented returnees" introduces the persistent issue in EN of membership, focusing on a group of lay members (Ezra 2:60) and of priests (2:61–63), ending with a tentative solution about priests.

Notably, two of the families whose membership is questioned bear names (Tobiah and Delaiah) connected to Nehemiah's adversaries. Although the status of the families in question remains uncertain, some continue as members, with restrictions in the case of the priests. Many details remain obscure, but the messages of this section are clear: first, criteria for membership were established, with steps for adjudication; and second, written records were important and expected in the case of priests.

Written records are a key theme in EN. In this instance the issue reflects the reality that exiled and/or dispersed people cannot readily establish identity through local witnesses. Emphasis on writing, then, may reflect the condition of dispersion and absence of social continuities (so Buster 2016).

Two of the three nonpriestly names are Yahwistic, which is relatively uncommon in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. Yahwistic names, then, are not reckoned sufficient as proof of Judean origin. This detail complicates studies of the period based on names.

Notes

2:59. *And these are the ones going up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, Immer //* Neh 7:61. The heading echoes the list's beginning (Ezra 2:1–2 // Neh 7:6–7), where individuals' names follow the location. The settlements here are otherwise unknown. The last three may be personal names, not places.

Tel-melah, Tel-harsha. The LXX has *Thelmeleth* and *Thelarēsa.* The places are unknown. *Tel* means "mound" and sometimes is associated in the Bible with ruined, devastated places (see, e.g., Jer 49:2) or (more likely here) can be part of a place name (see Tel-abib in Ezek 3:15). Clines (1984, 58) supposes villages built on top of Babylonian

ruins. Tel-melah could refer to salt mounds or "mines" since it literally means "a mound of salt" (see the mention of salt mines in Briant 2002, 760).

Tel-harsha. The noun *ḥ.r.š.* is typically associated with craftsmanship and craftsmen (as in 2 Sam 5:11). In 1 Sam 13:19 it refers to metalwork but elsewhere to stone or wood workers. Biblical building projects employed craftsmen working with wood and stone (Ezra 3:7). Association with metal is pronounced in Second Isaiah (see Isa 54:16; see also "plow" in Isa 28:24). The reference could be to quarries where deportees had been settled. The "valley of *ḥărāšîm,*" that is, a quarry (1 Chr 4:14), exemplifies such a possibility. Deportees in the ancient world were settled where they could engage in productive but also menial and difficult work. Also possible are iron mines mentioned as resources for the Persian Empire. Less likely is derivation from the verb *ḥ.r.š.,* "to be silent" (Num 30:12) or "deaf" (Lev 19:14; see also Ezra 2:52).

Cherub, Addan, Immer. Nehemiah 7:61 has "Cherub, Adon, and Immer"—possibly place names, but this is unknown. Immer appears as a family name in Ezra 2:37. First Esdras 5:36 considers these personal names and renders the phrase "under the leadership of Cherub, Addan, Immer." Pseudo Ibn Ezra likewise treats these as personal names.

unable to tell their paternal household and their seed whether they are of Israel. Whether applied to the three names that precede (per Pseudo Ibn Ezra) or to those that follow (most commentators), this statement highlights that legitimacy was a concern for which proof was needed and that household affiliation and genealogy (being of the "seed") were required for community membership. It remains obscure how such proof could be established. Ezra 2:62–63 refers to documents and defers the legitimation of priests to divination. We are not informed about the immediate status of these "undocumented."

paternal household. Heb. *bêt ʾābhôt,* lit. "the house of the fathers." See "paternal heads" in Notes at Ezra 1:5. Membership in a household rather than tribal affiliation comes to the fore in EN, although Judah and Benjamin remain the umbrella categories (Ezra 1:5) to which households belong.

seed. Heb. *zeraʿ*. The term is common for establishing genealogical familial relations. Reference to ancestral or patriarchal household identifies a person's social and biological origin. See "seed" in Notes at Ezra 9:2.

Israel. This term is used frequently in EN, both to differentiate "lay" members from cult personnel (as in Ezra 7:7) and to encompass the entire community (6:21). As Williamson (1989, 142) rightly observes, the question of self-identity proves important in the postexilic period: "What now *is* Israel, and what does it mean to say that 'we' are Israel?" For EN, Judah and Benjamin constitute Israel. At times the term includes priests and Levites; at others, it designates only the rest of the community (as in 2:2–35). In Ezra 6:17 sacrifices are made according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel, and in 8:35, those returning from exile sacrificed twelve bulls "for all Israel," representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Who belongs to Israel remains a persistent challenge throughout the book. It is commonly assumed that EN considers the *gôlâ* members alone as Israel, but arguably, the *gôlâ* community may seek to establish itself as also Israel despite coming from the diaspora. See further at Ezra 9–10.

2:60. *Delaiah . . . Tobiah* // Neh 7:62. Both names are Yahwistic, with the theophoric *yāh.* The presence of these two Yahwistic names for those of dubious origins is striking,

given the paucity of Yahwistic names elsewhere in the list (only nine or ten of nearly one hundred people's names). This raises the question about the extent to which names can signal familial and ethnic identity. The writer of this list appears to say that Israelite or Judean names are insufficient identity markers. This detail complicates assessing Judean identity in tablets from Al Yahudu. Scholars typically rely on Yahwistic names for Judean identity in Babylonia and in the Elephantine documents where Yahwistic names are common. The community in EN has different strictures. It may be more than a coincidence that in EN both names refer elsewhere to Nehemiah's adversaries.

Delaiah. In EN, the name belongs to an ancestor of Nehemiah's opponent Shemaiah (Neh 6:10). In 1 Chr 3:24 it belongs to descendants of Zerubbabel. It also appears elsewhere in the Bible and extrabiblical sources. Most importantly, a Delaiah in Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.7.29 // Cowley 30, dated 407 BCE) is son of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria (Nehemiah's major opponent; see, e.g., Neh 2:10). Although common, the name's association with opposition to Nehemiah may point to attempts to delegitimize that family and thus Samaria's leadership.

Tobiah. The name means "God [Yah] is good." It is one of the few Yahwistic names in the list (see above at "*Delaiah . . . Tobiah*") and also the name of Nehemiah's other chief opponent, whom Nehemiah calls "the Ammonite slave/servant" (Neh 2:10). A connection with this figure cannot be excluded, given that the list incorporates names from different periods. The name Tobiah is common, however. It appears in Zech 6:10 and 14 in connection with temple gifts. It refers to a soldier in the Lachish ostraca (nos. 3 and 5). Significantly, a version of the name belongs to a prominent family in Ammon, the Tobiads, known from archaeology and Josephus. Their tomb from the Hellenistic period still stands in 'Araq el-Emir in Jordan (Eskenazi 1992d). Tobiah in Neh 2:10 possibly belongs to that family. So too Tobiah in the present list (Lipschits 2021, 95).

Nekoda. The name appears among the Netinim; see Ezra 2:48 (Neh 7:50). Conceivably, the same family may be intended, but a separate group is more likely.

652 // Neh 7:62: *642.* This group is quite large. It would have been a significant challenge to adjudicate their status. What happened to them is not recorded.

2:61. *of the priests: Sons of Habaiah, sons of Hakkoz //* Neh 7:63. Questions about the priests may pertain either to proof of lineage or to proof of preserved priestly standards. Leviticus 21:7, for example, prohibits priests from marrying prostitutes or widows.

Habaiah // Neh 7:63: Hobaiah. The name is unique to the list. While Yahwistic, its meaning remains obscure.

Hakkoz. The name could mean "the thorn." It is rare, mentioned only in EN and once in 1 Chr 24:10 leading a priestly list. This name is a peg upon which several theories are hung. A "Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz" appears in Neh 3:4 and 21 among the builders of the wall. A priest named "Meremoth son of Uriah" in Ezra 8:33 manages the temple gifts that Ezra and his entourage bring. While not definitive, such references suggest that Hakkoz and his family were eventually legitimated. Fried (2015a, 130) attempts to establish dates for this individual and the eventual inclusion of the family among legitimate priests. She assumes that the Hakkoz family was reinstated by the time of Ezra, which she dates to 398 BCE. She concludes that it regained that full priestly status between 445 and 398 BCE; this would account for Meremoth's role in Ezra's mission (see "Urim and Thummim" in Notes at Ezra 2:63). Such specific dat-

ing on the basis of this name, however, is problematic (on theories regarding this family, see the Notes at Ezra 8:33).

sons of Barzillai who had taken from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name. Taking the name of a wife's family is not attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; nevertheless, the practice has ancient and modern parallels in several cultures where a man becomes his father-in-law's son and heir. This usually occurs when a man with means wishes to reward a son-in-law or to secure inheritance for his daughter or grandchildren by a daughter, sometimes even when he has sons. See examples from Nuzi and Arrapha (Paulissiann 1999, 15–17). In such cases, the daughter's husband inherits that family's property (according to Num 27:1–11, daughters inherit when there are no sons). In 2 Sam 19:31–39, Barzillai the Gileadite features as a wealthy man and staunch supporter of King David. David's last words require Solomon to ensure that Barzillai's descendants be treated well (1 Kgs 2:7). Presumably, Ezra 2:61 concerns a priest (whose name is omitted in the LXX) who married into the Barzillai family at some unspecified time and was adopted as heir. This rendered the line priestly in accordance with its patrilineal descent, but legally the line belonged to the wife's family.

Biological priestly ancestry is not in question; the challenge is the nature of affiliation—whether the family line is to be construed genealogically (genetically) or socially. Genealogically speaking, the priestly male "seed" remains unaltered regardless of an acquired family name. But since the man legally joined another group, does he forfeit his own priestly line by foregoing the paternal association? The case demands clarification as to whether the essential qualifications for priesthood or membership in the community are biological or social. Unfortunately, a clear answer is not available, but the question raises a challenge to a simple biological interpretation of community. For a different perspective, see Washington (1994, 236), who considers the underlying issue to be the Barzillais' specific origin: "The group was marginalized because of its descent from a Transjordanian family." Lipschits (2021, 85–97) considers this a polemic against the Barzillai family claiming it is a non-Judean family and intermarried.

was called by their name. The daughters are the subject and thus the bearers of the name, although Williamson (1985) follows 1 Esd 5:38, which has "his name." Naming after the wife's family line is unusual. Thus "we have here a clear deviation from the more common pattern of a woman incorporated into her husband's family by taking his name" (Eskenazi 1992a, 38). Boer (2005, 237) objects to designating this situation as matrilineal descent, because Barzillai is the father's name. Nevertheless, the text links the name with the daughters ("their name") for this priestly line in the MT and LXX.

2:62. *These, those registering, sought their written document and they were not found* // Neh 7:64. The Hebrew of the MT is awkward. It can be translated also as "these sought their written document of those registered, and they were not found." But the basic point is simple: priests were expected to be registered in a written record. In this case, the relevant information was not available: either the priests were not found in it (as the plural form of "found" in Ezra 2 suggests) or the registration document was not found (as the singular "found" in Neh 7 suggests). The linguistic problem in the MT stems from the uncertain relationship between *kĕtābām,* "their written document" or "writing," and the *mityaḥśîm,* a plural participle from the root *y.ḥ.ś.,* meaning usually "to register" in terms of affiliation. Does *mityaḥśîm* refer to the people who are registering? Or does it modify "document," to render "their written document of registra-

tions"? The present translation takes the first option, as does Pseudo Rashi. The LXX implies the same with *hoi methōesim.* Most translations, however, choose the second option: "these sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy" (KJV); "these searched for their genealogical records" (NJPS); "these looked for their entries in the genealogical records" (NRSV); and "these sought the registry of their genealogy" (Fried 2015a, 90). Nor is it certain whether the clause is confined to the priests related to Barzillai or to all the priests listed. However, this passage establishes the importance of written documentation in the case of priests. Understandably, written records are especially important in times of mobility.

those registering. Heb. *hammityaḥśîm.* The common translation has been "genealogical record(s)" (see, e.g., KJV, NRSV, and NJPS), but the word most likely refers to the people attempting to register. The verb appears only in EN and Chronicles. Significantly, only two of the twenty-one references pertain to genealogy (1 Chr 5:7 and 7:9, where the term is paired with *tôlēdôt*). Elsewhere, the term describes various lists of people, for which "census" is the best analogue. An illuminating reference comes from Neh 7:5 where Nehemiah reports that he gathered the people to register/enroll and found the book/scroll of the *yaḥaś,* the registration. He finds (we are told) a version of the present list in Ezra 2. This, then, illustrates how the term is to be understood. Noun forms, however, appear in Ezra 8:1 and 3, recording families according to heads of households, and (as noted) in Neh 7:5, with reference to the list of the so-called returnees (Neh 7:6–72 // Ezra 2:1–70).

their written document. Heb. "[their] *kĕtābh.*" In Esther, where *kĕtābh* is most commonly used, the term designates written official documents (e.g., Esth 4:8 or 8:8). Like many translations, the NJPS renders this noun in Esther in various ways: as "document" (4:8), "script" (8:9), or "manner described" (9:27). Alter (2018) uses "writs" here. The consistent sense throughout is the authoritative nature of such a written text. Seeking evidence and authority in writing is a leitmotif in EN (Wright 2008). The authority of written documents is one of the three main themes that shape EN's account of the return and reconstruction (Eskenazi 1988a, 1–2).

they were not found. The plural form of the verb "find" suggests that these families were not found in the record. The parallel in Neh 7:64, with the singular verb "find," implies that the record was not found. That too is possible here. First Esdras mentions twice that these families were not found registered (1 Esd 5:38, 39).

and they were reckoned tainted with respect to the priesthood. The inability to ascertain the priests' cultic legitimacy puts the entire community at risk. Only when officiating priests are in a state of purity can they protect the sanctity and efficacy of offerings. The entire system depends on the priests' cultic purity as they facilitate atonement and reconciliation between God and Israel (see, e.g., Lev 7).

reckoned tainted. Heb. *vaygō'ălû,* from *g.a.l.* in the *pual.* While the sense of the Hebrew word in this context is clear, rendering it into English is difficult. The LXX is also obscure. The verb that describes the priests' problematic status is peculiar. This verb in the *qal* refers to redemption in nearly one hundred cases (as in Lev 25:25). However, twelve times in certain late texts and contexts the verb implies "desecration" or "defilement" (in the *pual* as here and in Mal 1:7 and 12, *piel* in Mal 1:7, *niphal* in Lam 4:14 and Isa 59:3, *hiphil* in Isa 63:3, or *hithpael* in Dan 1:8). All of these are postexilic (see

also Job 3:5, which is harder to date and where the meaning is more obscure). The word reappears in Neh 13:29, also in connection with priesthood. The meaning in these other texts resembles that of *gʿl* (that is, replacing the letter *aleph* with *ayin,* as in 2 Sam 1:21) and may be a byform, as Pseudo Ibn Ezra also suggests. The KJV has "as polluted"; the NRSV, "were excluded . . . as unclear"; the NJPS, "disqualified." Williamson (1985) has "debarred." It is clear, however, that priests whose standing could not be verified were excluded from certain priestly roles but not from the community itself. As the following verse indicates, their status is to be reassessed at a later point. Nehemiah uses the same term in relation to objectionable priests (Neh 13:29).

2:63. *And the* Tirshata *said to them that they should not eat of the holy of holies //* Neh 7:65. The first measure is to prevent contaminating that which is most sacred. The priests with uncertain credentials forfeit (temporarily, until a solution is found) one of the chief benefits: receiving the sacrificial portions uniquely given to such cult personnel (see, e.g., Lev 7:1–6; for restrictions, see, e.g., Lev 22:4–8). They are not, however, excluded from the community or necessarily barred from other priestly roles. The authority to determine such matters at present is ascribed to an official whose identity is uncertain.

the Tirshata. Heb. *tiršātāʾ,* probably from Old Persian *tarshta,* "revered" (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 92). The LXX transliterates the word here and in Neh 7:65. The NRSV and Williamson (1985, 27) prefer "governor," first proposed in Meyer (1896, 194; see Williamson 1985, 27 n. 63a, for a detailed review of the less convincing options). The NJPS transliterates "the Tirshata," noting that the term designates a Persian title. The New American Bible has "his excellency." Fried (2015a, 131) first regarded it as Nehemiah's Persian title but later (2021, 188–89) as the name of another, Persian, official in charge of the temple. The definite article "the" indicates that EN does not consider this a name.

This obscure term appears only in EN, five times in the MT (here, Ezra 2:69, Neh 8:9, Neh 10:2, and Neh 7:65) but only twice, transliterated, in the LXX (here and in Neh 7:65). The last two citations in the MT state that Nehemiah is the *tiršātāʾ* in a manner that reflects an insertion; these likely additions indicate that the final authors of EN applied the term to a governor. Is this governor in Ezra 2:63 Judean or Persian? Several governors appear in EN, with the widely recognized title *peḥâ.* Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River investigates the building of the temple (Ezra 5:3–6:15); Ezra 5:14 bestows the title *peḥâ* on Sheshbazzar. An unidentified Judean governor, *peḥâ,* appears at the conclusion of the temple rebuilding (Ezra 6:7). Nehemiah identifies himself as *peḥâ,* governor, in Neh 5:14. Haggai regularly addresses Zerubbabel as *peḥâ,* governor (see, e.g., Hag 1:1). These references could imply that the authors of EN regards the *tiršātāʾ* as a Judean, appointed by the court for a high office, like Nehemiah. If he is Nehemiah and the section is late, the association with Nehemiah's opponents in Ezra 2:60 is rendered stronger.

Fried (2015a, 131–32; 2021, 188–89) finds here evidence that the Persian court controlled priestly appointments in Jerusalem. Signs of Persian imperial authorization of temple personnel exist for Egypt (see the fifth-century BCE Udjahorresnet Stele), and a story in Josephus (*Ant.* XI.vii.1–2/297–312) indicates that a Persian general might help a priest gain his office. However, that story shows that the general failed. Besides,

as the present verse attests, the final arbiter in cultic matters in EN was internal—in this case a priest using the Urim and Thummim (for the fifth reference to *tiršātā᾽,* in Neh 7:69, see the NOTES at Ezra 2:68).

First Esdras 5:40 transliterates the term and adds Nehemiah as another leader, one of several indications that 1 Esdras is familiar with the Nehemiah material but omits his account to promote a different version of postexilic reconstruction.

not eat of the holy of holies. Heb. *qōdeš haqŏdāšîm.* Leviticus 2:1–10 and 6:7–7:6 designate portions of altar offerings exclusively to "the priests sons of Aaron." Conventionally translated as "holy of holies," this technical term is more accurately rendered "the most consecrated" (see discussion of *qōdeš* at Ezra 9:2; I retain the conventional translation here to facilitate cross-references to other bibilical texts). Leviticus 21 and 22 (esp. Lev 21:21–22) describe rules for partaking of such portions. Although a maimed priest may not officiate at the altar, he may eat of the two types of offerings, "the holy of holies" or "most consecrated" and "the holies" or "consecrated" (*qŏdāšîm*). The latter is also permitted to the priestly household, including widows and divorcees (Lev 22:13) and even slaves (Lev 22:11). Other passages mention sharing offerings with family, including sons and daughters (Lev 7:32–34, Lev 10:14, Num 18:11–19). The undocumented priests are excluded from the one category but not necessarily from the community or from other priestly privileges or obligations. As we learn next, the abstention may be temporary. Rabbinic sages debate the scope of restrictions for these priestly families (*Kethuboth* 24b). Some argue that all sacrifices and contributions to the priesthood were forbidden to them in this passage, whereas others claim that only certain sacrifices were forbidden (see also b. Qidd. 69b and Pseudo Rashi).

until there should rise a priest for the Urim and Thummim. The exclusion from the most sacred is an interim measure, with the outcome to be determined by a qualified priest through a time-honored procedure: priestly divination. The decision could not be rendered presently because of either the lack of a qualified priest or, more likely, the absence of the divining tool, the Urim and Thummim. The governor or *Tirshata* does not adjudicate the matter but rather delays and defers to the authority of a qualified priest. Here, as elsewhere in EN, we meet with details that trail off into silence, either because no further information was available to the editors/authors, because the authors did not deem it important, or because the information was common knowledge that needed no elaboration.

rise. Lit. *stand*. That is, officially hold a position, be appointed.

a priest. Nehemiah 7:65 has "the priest."

Urim and Thummim. Hebrew meaning "lights and completion," which the LXX renders as *phōtizousin kai tois teleiois,* "lights and perfections." This small divination device, worn by priests, was used to access God's will on specific issues (see Num 27:21 and 1 Sam 28:6). According to Exod 28:28–30 and Lev 8:8, it was attached to the priest's garment or breastplate (*ḥōšen*). Although we do not know the details, it seems likely that it was a dicelike device suited for "yes" or "no" answers. Josephus speaks of "shining" as a sign that the device was active (*Ant.* III.214). The opening Hebrew letter of each word, Urim and Thummim, suggests a merismus: the *aleph* in Urim is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the *tav* in Thummim is the last, together conveying totality (like "from A to Z"). *Yoma* 21b claims that Urim and Thummim were among the First Temple objects no longer available in the Second Temple period. Pseudo Rashi

confesses to being baffled by this passage since the Urim and Thummim did not exist in the Second Temple period. Pseudo Ibn Ezra resolves the dilemma by reading "until a priest should rise fit for Urim and Thummim," that is a qualified priest. Fried (2007) hypothesizes from references in Josephus (e.g., *Ant.* III.218 and IV.311) and Ben Sira (45:11), along with other pre-Christian sources, that the Urim and Thummim may have functioned for a time until the death of John Hyrcanus. She further concludes from Ezra 8:33 that the solution was found by 398 BCE, since a son of Uriah the priest received the temple gifts during Ezra's arrival (Fried 2015a, 130). Such calculation is too specific. That Uriah may not have been from the family of Hakkoz. If he was, he could have functioned in a more limited capacity, since in Ezra 8 he merely receives gifts from the diaspora but does not officiate at the altar. It is plausible to conclude that these priests retained some priestly rights as indefinite interim measures but without full access to the most sacred. Williamson (1985, 37) plausibly opines that "Urim and Thummim" refers to the time when proper cultic life would be reconstituted, rather than to the object itself. Urim and Thummim thus expresses reestablishing proper priestly authority. A similar sense can be inferred from 1 Esd 5:40, which refers to a future high priest wearing the "Revelation and Faithfulness" (Urim and Thummim).

The rest of EN is silent on the subject, as is the Hebrew Bible. Because Uriah of the family of Hakkoz later functions as a priest, we may conclude that some method for determining the purity of the priesthood developed over time. First Maccabees 4:46 exemplifies a similar postponement where polluted altar stones were set aside "until a prophet should arise"; see also 1 Macc 14:41, where the high priest is temporarily assigned until a prophet should arise.

F. Summary, Conclusion, and Arrival (2:64–70)

2 [64]The whole congregation as one: 42,360, [65]apart from their male slaves and their female slaves, these being 7,337; and they had male singers and female singers: 200. [66]Their horses: 736; their mules: 245; [67]their camels: 435; donkeys: 6,720.

[68]And some of the paternal heads, upon their coming to the house of YHWH that was in Jerusalem, freely offered to the house of God, to set it upon its established site. [69]In accordance with their strength/ability they gave to the treasury for the work: gold darics: 61,000; and silver minas: 5,000; and priestly vestments: 100.

[70]And the priests, and the Levites, and of the people, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim settled in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

Introduction

The conclusion of the list offers a tally for the entire community, followed by a record of auxiliary personnel and livestock, culminating with a brief report about arrival. All versions (Ezra 2, Neh 7, LXX, and 1 Esdras) record the total as 42,360, but this exceeds by more than 11,000 the sums recorded in the lists themselves. The numbers also cannot be reconciled with available historical information and archaeological evidence that preclude this many people in the land. The message of the list, however, is crystal clear: thousands of people undertook building YHWH's house in Jerusalem.

Having introduced in detail the book's chief human actors (Ezra 2:1–67), the narrator records their initial actions in Ezra 2:68–70, focusing on arrival, the goal of which

is building God's house. Large donations illustrate enthusiastic commitment to rebuilding. At the end, and with no mention of the journey (in contrast to the exodus narrative), all are settled in their towns. Exile is over.

Notes

2:64. *The whole congregation as one: 42,360* // Neh 7:66. In its present literary context, the number reflects the total of Judeans who embarked upon building YHWH's house in response to Cyrus's decree as per Ezra 1:1–6. Ezra 2:1 identifies them as "those going up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had exiled to Babylonia; and they returned to Jerusalem." In Nehemiah (7:5), the list constitutes "the book of registration," of those who came up first, that is, earlier than Nehemiah.

Archaeological findings and contradictions within EN render improbable such a "mass return" in the early Persian period. The discrepancy between the total and the actual sums adds another layer of uncertainty in attempting to assess the reliability, origin, purpose, redactional history, and implications of the list(s). Very likely the editors reproduced divergent traditions, expanding the list over time. Possibly, the numerical discrepancy resulted from textual corruption in the transmission of lists (Allrik 1954). Most illuminating is Fried's (2015a, 139–41) observation that the list of contributions from Elephantine (*TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22) reflects similar inconsistencies. If so, the criteria by which we evaluate reliability appear to differ from accounting practices in the Persian period. First Esdras 5:41 reads, "All the men of Israel, from twelve years of age on, exclusive of male and female slaves, numbered 42,360."

congregation. Heb. *qāhāl;* the LXX has *ekklēsia.* The term suggests a deliberately constituted community, not simply a random collection of people. This meaning is consistent with other examples of the term throughout the Bible. In Ezra 10:1 and Neh 8:2, such a congregation explicitly includes women, which seems applicable to other appearances of the term (e.g., Ezra 10:8, 14; Neh 5:13; 8:17; 13:1). In EN such *qāhāl* participates in communal decision-making (see, e.g., Ezra 10). Deuteronomy 31:12 uses the verbal form to require regular assembling of the community (men and women) to hear the teachings of the *torah.* Fried's (2015a, 90) translation, "community," captures these nuances, but "congregation," like "assembly" (NRSV), underscores more fully the formal aspect. Becking's (2018, 45) suggestion, that *qāhāl* in EN designates a "religious community," highlights the term's ideological weight but narrows its implications.

42,360. The large number of people poses the greater challenge. Archaeology shows no signs of such a large population influx in the early Persian period. While calculations of the entire population in the province fluctuate widely, even the highest estimates fall short of this number. Carter (1999, 201) estimates some 13,350 in the early Persian period and 20,650 in mid-fifth century BCE.

Since the 3,044 volunteers to repopulate Jerusalem in Neh 11:1–19 are reckoned as 10 percent of the Judean population, this suggests some 30,000 for the province in Nehemiah's time (Lipschits 2005, 161–62).

Redditt (2012, 231) considers the discrepancy between the two sums, coupled with the message in Ezra 2:59–63 // Neh 7:61–65, to communicate that "only 29,818/31,099 were numbered by fathers' houses or towns"; the rest, implicitly "did not belong to the true Israel."

We have no sure way to explain this large number for the population. While certainty cannot be achieved, the number likely stands for the list of all registered Judeans throughout the period, without regard to when they lived. Numbers were probably gathered from limited records, with no attempt to harmonize them. Although the list was likely expanded at different stages, the final shaper(s) of EN respected the sources enough to allow available records to stand without tampering to achieve consistency.

2:65. *their male slaves and their female slaves, these being 7,337* // Neh 7:67. The ratio of one slave or servant per six adults does not reflect great wealth. The affluent woman Mibtahiah in Elephantine, for example, owned at least three slaves when she died (*TAD* B 2.11 // Cowley 28). Some in the community, surely its leaders, had greater economic resources, as the donations in Ezra 2:68–70 // Neh 7:69–71 illustrate.

they had male singers and female singers: 200 // Neh 7:67: *245.* The Hebrew for male singers here, *měšōrĕrîm,* is identical to the term for cult officials in Ezra 2:41 // Neh 7:44. The LXX translates both as *adontes.* Here, however, the term refers to entertainers. First Esdras 5:42 has "musicians" (*psaltai*) and "singers" (*psaltōdoi*), numbered as in Neh 7:67 and differentiated from the cult singers, *hieropsaltai,* in 1 Esd 5:27. In 1 Sam 16:18, David is hired to calm King Saul with music. In Eccl 2:8, the royal figure recruits male and female singers for entertainment, but the terminology differs (*šārîm* and *šārôt*). In both places, "singers" signals people of low status hired by wealthy employers. As Fried (2015a, 133) notes, music was a vital part of everyday life in antiquity. Singers, typically with instruments, were an integral part of festivities such as weddings (Jer 33:11), military victories (Exod 15:20–21), and other joyous occasions. On singers as composers as well, see the Notes at Ezra 2:41.

female singers. Heb. *měšōrĕrôt.* The term appears only here. Ecclesiastes 2:8 uses a different term for female singers (*šārôt*). Women singers appear regularly in victory accounts, albeit without the title "singers": female prophets recite the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:20–21) and Song of Deborah (Judg 5:1); but see also 1 Sam 18:6 (on women and music, see C. Meyers 1991).

2:66. *Their horses: 736; their mules: 245.* This verse does not appear in Nehemiah 7, although the NRSV inserts it in Neh 7:68. First Esdras 5:43, where the order differs, mentions 7,036 horses and 245 mules. The Bible typically associates horses with military or royal personnel and missions and as a sign of grandeur (see the extravagant tribute offered to King Solomon in 2 Chr 9:24). They may thus imply a military escort. Zechariah 14:15 is the only biblical passage to list all four animals in this section in this order, describing a plague about to strike Jerusalem's enemies. To Fried (2015a, 141), references to horses and mules, as well as to camels and donkeys below, reflect a tax list accountable to Persian authorities: the imperial army needed transport animals, and the information allowed authorities to calibrate expectations. But mules as transport were also essential for commerce and agriculture (see Mitchell 2019). In Hittite texts mules appear more valued than horses (Mitchell 2019).

2:67. *their camels: 435; donkeys: 6,720* // Neh 7:68. These beasts of burden constitute a very small number compared with the number of people in the list. But as noted, the list most likely does not describe an actual caravan. No substantive conclusions can be based on the numbers here. First Esdras 5:43 lists 5,525 donkeys.

2:68. *And some of the paternal heads, upon their coming to the house of YHWH . . . donated to the house of God.* Ezra 2:68–70 differs somewhat from Neh 7:69–72 [ET 73],

the LXX, and 1 Esdras. Scholars use the differences to determine which version of the list is earlier. Yet the basic messages are unmistakable: restoring YHWH's house is about to begin, generously subsidized by community members.

And some of the paternal heads // Neh 7:70. The conclusion of the list loops back to the beginning: these heads of families in Ezra 1:5 rose up to build God's house in response to God and Cyrus's decree. These leaders represent the general community, not cult personnel. The parallel in Neh 7:69–70 includes the *tiršātāʾ* (with a large contribution) among the contributors, as well as "the rest of the people." First Esdras 5:44–45 follows Ezra 2.

paternal heads. Heb. *rāʾšê hāʾābhôt.* Lit. "heads of fathers," family heads; see the Notes at Ezra 1:5. Reverting to the distinctive language of Ezra 1:5 highlights the founding mission. It may also serve as a resumptive repetition if the preceding list was an insertion (see at Ezra 4:24 for another resumptive repetition).

upon their coming to the house of YHWH. This sentence, which is not in Neh 7:70, here serves as an introduction to the restoration that extends all the way to Nehemiah 7. Given that building the temple does not commence until Ezra 3, and is not finished for decades, one is reminded that this account is retrospective.

offered freely. The Hebrew root *n.d.b.,* "contributed" or "donated," harks back to Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1:4) and the people's initial response (1:6), highlighting the correspondence between the decree and its implementation. EN employs forms of this verb frequently in connection with building God's house (ten times: Ezra 1:4, 6; 2:68; 3:5 [twice]; 7:13, 15, 16; 8:28; and Neh 11:2). It alludes to Exodus 25 and 35, where *n.d.b.* expresses the enthusiasm with which the Israelites devoted themselves and their means to constructing the tabernacle (Exod 35:21). Those contributions were so abundant that God and Moses had to ask the people to stop (Exod 36:5–6).

to the house of God, to set it upon its established site. These phrases (not in Neh 7:70) highlight the deliberate emphasis on God's house as both destination and purpose.

established site. Heb. *mĕkhônô.* The term suggests the original place but also establishes that Jerusalem is God's place (see also Ezra 3:3).

2:69. *In accordance with their strength/ability they gave* // Neh 7:69. All did the most they could, a likely allusion to the devotion in building the tabernacle (Exod 25 and 35–36).

the treasury. Nehemiah 10:39 describes such a storehouse in the temple. The reference here can be regarded as anachronistic or as proleptic (see also "treasury" in Notes at Ezra 7:20).

darics. Heb. *darkĕmônîm.* The LXX omits the term, using "pure gold minas" (on minas, see "*silver minas: 5,000"* below). The Hebrew resembles the term for both the Greek coin drachma and the Persian coin daric. It appears only in EN, here and in the parallel in Neh 7:69–71. The daric was a gold coin weighing 8.4 grams. A drachma was a Greek/Athenian silver coin weighing 4.366 grams.

The word "daric" is derived from King Darius I (522–486 BCE), who presumably instituted it as a mode of payment and whose image, with bow and arrow, was stamped on the coin. Plutarch refers to the ten thousand archers, that is, darics with the archer on them, as the Persian bribe to Athens against Sparta (*Ages.* 15.6).

Williamson (1985, 38) defends translating as "drachma," noting that "the Persian Daric had not yet been minted." This last point carries limited weight because the

passage is most likely later than Darius's time. The NJPS likewise supposes drachmas here, as does Fried (2015a, 135), but darics in Ezra 8:27. First Esdras 5:45 records only gold minas. Although the Hebrew sounds somewhat like "drachmas," the specification of gold, and the reference to silver listed next, tips the evidence in favor of translating "darics" (as do the NRSV and Blenkinsopp 1988; see further "darics" in Notes at Ezra 8:27).

61,000. If darics are meant, this amounts in the MT to 512.4 kilograms of gold (more than 1,000 pounds), an exorbitant amount. Xenophon records that soldiers earned one gold daric a month (*Anab.* I.3.21). If so, this quantity of darics would support more than five thousand soldiers for a year. Evidently, the writer seeks to convey that the leaders dedicated much gold. If one translates "drachma," the amount is more modest but still high. Fried (2015a, 136), who translates "drachma," estimates about 54 kilograms (120 pounds) of gold, given the fluctuations during the Achaemenid period. Inexplicably, the NJPS has the figure 6,100. The KJV has "threescore and one thousand drams of gold." In Neh 7:69–71 this amount is divided among three contributors: the *Tirshata* (1,000), the heads of families (20,000), and the people as a whole (20,000). First Esdras 5:45 has a more modest 1,000 gold minas.

silver minas: 5,000. One mina was composed of 50 shekels or 100 drachmas (at times, 60 shekels). A Persian shekel weighed 5.68 grams. The Elephantine shekel weighed 8.76 grams, while some records in Babylonia point to 8.775 grams (Porten 1968, 65). Kochman and Heltzer (1985, 35) estimate that this amounts to 2,500 kilograms silver (about 5,511 pounds). Fried (2015a, 136) estimates about 4,500 kilograms (10,000 pounds) of silver. Nehemiah 7:70 credits the heads of the families with 2,200 minas and the rest of the people with 2,000. First Esdras 5:45 corresponds to Ezra, with 5,000 (on weights and measures, see Comments at 8:21–30).

priestly vestments: 100. Exodus 28 and 39 and Leviticus 8 linger at length on the priests' clothes. These vestments were fine linen, possibly fringed (Exod 28:39), fastened with an embroidered sash. The chief priest's robe had a bejeweled breastplate, but other priests were adorned solely with the robe, the embroidered sash, and a headdress. The vestments were ceremonial garments. Ezra 3:10 refers to priests in formal attire at the founding of the temple. The number of such garments implies the maximum number of officiating priests at a time. Nehemiah 7:69–70 records that the *Tirshata* contributed 530 vestments, and the rest of the people, 67. Awkward syntax in the Nehemiah version points to 500 as an insertion and 30 as the likely original. If so, Ezra 2 could be rounding 67 and 30 to 100. First Esdras 5:45 also has 100. Attention to such garments here emphasizes provision for cult personnel, not only for the building. But EN provides no further information about them. Nehemiah 7:69 also mentions fifty basins, donated by the *Tirshata.*

2:70. *And the priests, and the Levites, and of the people, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim settled in their towns, and all Israel in their towns* // Neh 7:72. The conclusion portrays a demographically restored community settled on its land. It sets the stage for the building activities that follow. The order in Neh 7:72 differs slightly, but both versions begin with cult personnel.

in their towns . . . all Israel in their towns. This repetition (see also the parallel in Neh 7:72) underscores the importance of resuming life in the land, with all now settled where they belong: *their* towns. Most likely "all Israel" here encompasses both cult

personnel and other Israelites, but it could imply different locations for priests and Levites (probably Jerusalem), with Judeans living elsewhere. This is what 1 Esd 5:46 conveys. In either case, the repetition highlights the significance of Israel restored and the undoing of exile.

Comments (2:1–70)

As Finkelstein (2008, 1) rightly observes, the list in Ezra 2:1–70, with its near repetition in Nehemiah 7, forms one of the cornerstones for studying Judah in the Persian period. Nehemiah (situated in the mid-fifth century BCE) refers to the virtually identical list in Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73] as the list of those "going up at first" (Neh 7:5). According to Ezra 2:64 // Neh 7:66, 42,360 people went up with slaves, entertainers, and beasts of burden. They resettled in their towns (Ezra 2:70 // Neh 7:72 [ET 73]). EN next describes how these people rebuilt God's house (Ezra 3–Neh 7) before repeating the list in Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73] to unify the entire period (as also does Neh 12:1–26).

The list and its repetition have been subject to much scholarly discussion. Early studies concentrated on determining which version came first, why it was repeated, and how it helps determine the demographic landscape of Persian-period Judah. From the mid-1980s, claims about "the myth of the empty land" stimulated discussions about the list's ideological rather than historical nature. New archaeological studies undermined the list's credibility as a historical record for a return of 42,360 people. As a result, the list and its repetition have been reexamined with the following issues in mind:

1. The relationship between the two versions of the list in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7
2. The origin of the list and its nature, historical backdrop, date (or the dates of its layers), and compositional history
3. The purposes of the lists in the final version of EN

The List: An Overview

At first glance, the list's heading and location imply that listed people came to Judah immediately after Cyrus's decree in 538 BCE. Ezra 2 was typically understood that way until the twentieth century. Since archaeological studies rule out a mass return in the early Persian period, the list lost historical credibility. Kellermann (1968) and, naturally, Torrey (1910 [1970 ed.], 250) are among the early scholars who rejected the list's historical reliability. Torrey, however, appreciated its ideological intent as part of EN's overall polemics in the Hellenistic period.

But the list itself also complicates its claims of a mass early return. The named leaders in Ezra 2:2 prove prominent in various periods, extending to Nehemiah's time in the mid-fifth century BCE and possibly later (Blenkinsopp 1988, 85). Zerubbabel and Jeshua were active in 520 BCE. Other names appear as signatories on the pledge in Nehemiah 10, situated in the mid-fifth century BCE or later: Nehemiah (Neh 10:1), Seraiah (Neh 10:2), Rehum (Neh 10:25), and Baanah (Neh 10:27). The heading, then, does not record "mass return" under Cyrus or even Darius but one that extends for decades. This was noted already by the Jewish medieval commentator Pseudo Ibn Ezra on Neh 7:6: "Many were added that were not in the first numbers."

As for the data in the list, very few names include Yahwistic or overtly theophoric elements, in contrast to the numerous Yahwistic names in fifth-century BCE Elephan-

tine, Egypt. The listed towns are mostly in Benjamin. Several of them (Michmas, Geba, the Ramah, Anathoth, and Nob—in this order, though with other towns interspersed) appear together in Isa 10:28–32 in a prophecy assuring Jerusalem that the threat to its safety will be removed.

Archaeologists have either excavated or surveyed most of the sites on the list. Some listed towns show Persian-period presence (Michmas, Gibeon, Lod, Hadid, Azmaveth, and Jericho), and others attest to either weak presence (the Ramah, Beeroth, and Kiriatharim) or no Persian-period occupation (Geba and Anathoth; Finkelstein 2008). Finkelstein (2018), for example, concludes that Persian-period Judah included at most fifteen thousand people. The demographic arc of Judah, then, goes from high density before 597 BCE to decline during the Persian period, followed by varying degrees of recovery during the Hellenistic period. Interestingly, many Judean towns that have clear Persian-period remains do not appear in the list (see Edelman's [2005, 290–310] extensive chart, which includes more than two hundred sites).

With few exceptions, the list does not indicate where people settled. Several hundreds belong to Benjaminite towns (Ezra 2:21–34). Since Benjamin was not exiled, these names most likely reflect an expansion, including those who never left. The location of the others is never mentioned beyond "Jerusalem and Judah" in the heading (2:1).

The nature of the groups in the list is puzzling. Weinberg (1992b [originally 1973]) suggested that a new socioeconomic model of collectives emerged in the exilic and postexilic periods, structured as a "Citizen-Temple Community" (*Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde*). He considered groups in Ezra 2:3–19 // Neh 7:8–24 to represent this type of *bêt ʾābhôt* and considered the list an inventory of such collectives (ibid., 53). The *bêt ʾābhôt* was not a family but a collection of families, comparable to agnatic groups in ancient Iran (ibid., 54–56). In such groups, the designation *bēn* ("son") "indicates the membership in an ethnic, blood-related and professional community" (ibid., 57). The *bêt ʾābhôt* held property communally, and principles of solidarity bound its members.

Although some specifics of Weinberg's model no longer find support, his claim that these texts illustrate a distinct organizational model remains likely, but the nature of the reconfiguration is obscure.

Using archaeological data, Faust (2018) draws attention to large estates in the Persian period. He identifies the so-called forts excavated in Persian-period Judah as such estates, created during resettlement. As elsewhere throughout the empire, estates would have been complex and larger than ordinary households, not necessarily confined to a known town or village. Although Faust does not include Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 in his discussion of the subject, it is conceivable that the large groups in the list reflect such households or estates, listed alongside known towns. This would account for the shift between place names and family names. In this case a statement such as "of Zattu: 945" (Ezra 2:8) would encompass the estate workers and family members. The rise and nature of estates elsewhere in the Persian period is now well documented by Henkelman (2018).

Four groups in the list raise distinct problems: Elam, Pahath-moab, Bigvai, and Senaah. Elam is mentioned twice, each time with 1,254 members. Elam is known as one of the large, foundational kingdoms of the Persian Empire. That is also what "Elam" means elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., Jer 49:35). Pahath-moab (Ezra 2:6) refers to

a household only in EN. The name, however, could mean "governor of Moab." Would this refer to a group that found refuge in Moab from Babylonian devastation (as Jer 40:11 reports)? Laird (2016, 95) also observes that Bigvai's Persian name "suggests a family group organized in an exilic or postexilic setting with little time to grow into such large numbers." She rightly adds that these names "problematize the assertions that the list establishes a link to preexilic ancestors or that it is establishing membership based on genealogy" (ibid.). Finally, the last in the list of "Israel" is Senaah, with 3,630 members, making it the largest group (Ezra 2:35). Yet it is not possible to determine whether Senaah refers to a town, a household, or a family.

A number of these names appear in seals and bullae from Judah from the monarchic period onward but do not directly connect with the individuals in EN. Avigad and Sass (1997) list many such names, for example, Asaph (no. 85), Giddel (no. 174), Hagab (no. 489), Eliashib (nos. 70–75) forms of Hanan (pp. 200–201), Parosh (no. 334), Pashhur (no. 335), and Shephatiah (pp. 236–37).

The absence of Ezra's name from Ezra 2:2a also complicates matters. The parallel in Neh 7:7 includes Azariah, possibly a Hebrew form of Ezra, and several scholars use this version to find Ezra in the list (see, e.g., Fried 2015a, 93; Fried also notes that Azariah is a common Persian-period name). Williamson (1985, 24 n. 2b), while accepting Azariah and Seraiah as possible references, persuasively concludes that it is unlikely that the book would assign such a prominent figure as Ezra a different name (32). Silence about Ezra could support theories of his arrival after Nehemiah and could date the list earlier. At the same time, the mention of eleven, not twelve, leaders in Ezra 2:2 may imply that the author reckoned Sheshbazzar among the leaders, thus having the expected twelve. As is apparent, the list raises many unresolved questions.

The Relationship between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7

The repetition of the list in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 is one of the most striking features of EN. Scholars concur that the repeated list, or most of it, was incorporated into the book by a late editor of EN but disagree as to which location or version has priority.

The two lists are virtually the same, aside from some spelling and number differences (e.g., Bani in Ezra 2:10 is Binnui in Neh 7:15; Rehum in Ezra 2:2 in Nehum is Neh 7:7). Some numbers differ, with Nehemiah's typically being larger (e.g., Senaah, with 3,630 in Ezra 2:35 and 3,930 in Neh 7:38). There are occasional inconsistencies in defining groups, alternating between "men of" and "sons of." But these differences are relatively slight and do not significantly help when dating the lists. The major difference stands out in the heading and the concluding summary that possibly originated separately from the list's content. Importantly, Ezra 2:2a lists eleven leaders in its heading whereas Nehemiah has the more symbolic number of twelve.

Williamson (1983, 1985) regards Nehemiah 7 as the earlier version because Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73] better fits its context. The concluding reference to the seventh month in Neh 7:72b [ET 73b] functions better than the link between Ezra 2:70 and Ezra 3:1ff. Moreover, the numbers in Ezra 2:68–69 appear to round off the more detailed account in Neh 7:68–70 [ET 69–71] (Williamson 1983, 2–8). This suggests to Williamson that Ezra 2 depends on Nehemiah 7, which also fits Williamson's overall compositional view that Ezra 1–6 is the latest major stratum of EN.

Some prioritize Ezra 2 (Blenkinsopp 1988, 83–84; Kratz 2000, 63–67; Wright 2005, 301–3). Blenkinsopp shows links between Ezra 2 and 3, with common vocabulary between Ezra 2:68–69 and Ezra 1 (see, e.g., Ezra 1:5–6) as well. Wright's redactional analysis further highlights links between Ezra 2 and 3, leading him to conclude that Ezra 2 came first. According to Wright (2005, 303), when Nehemiah enrolls residents in rebuilt Jerusalem, he finds the list "nowhere else than in Ezra 1–6, as Spinoza proposed long ago."

Detailed analyses of the list's connection to its context in both Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 show how well the list is integrated into both places. This permits a third (and in my view most likely) possibility: that the list was incorporated into both locations simultaneously at a late stage of the compositional history (see also Boda 2008, 45). Such a view would comport well with the late date for the list. It also helps interpret the function of the list as unifying EN.

For a long time, the list's repetition in both Ezra and Nehemiah has helped perpetuate the perception that Ezra 1–10 and Nehemiah 1–13 are two different books. The undergirding assumption was that the repetition of major sections is likely to occur between biblical books (see Isa 36–39 and 2 Kgs 18–20) but not within them. But this presumption, that a single book will not repeat a major section, has occluded appreciating how and why an author would use such repetition.

As I have shown in the study of EN's structure (Eskenazi 1988b), the list's repetition in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 functions as a unifying frame for the three stages of return and reconstruction in EN. It also highlights the chief human protagonists of the book.

The Origin, Date, and Compositional History of the List(s)

Nehemiah introduces the list as the "book of registration [*sēper hayyaḥaś*] of those going up at first" (Neh 7:5). The list's heading refers to those coming from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 2:1–2a // Neh 7:6–7). "At first" could refer to any time prior to Nehemiah's discovery of the list. The list is most likely a composite, with a major core to which material was added over time.

The heading (Ezra 2:1–2a // Neh 7:6) and the conclusion (Ezra 2:68–70 // Neh 7:69–72 [ET 7:70–73]) seem independent of the list. The list of families and towns may have been independent from the rest and from each other (Ezra 2:21–34 // Neh 7:25–37), and so too accounts of cult personnel such as the Netinim and Solomon's servants (Ezra 2:43–58 // Neh 7:46–60). The section about the undocumented families also could have originated separately.

The composite nature of the list is reflected in the types of information it preserves, shifts in language for categories (a mixture of family names and towns names, identity as "men of" and "sons of"), inconsistencies (the total diverging from the itemized numbers by more than ten thousand), and different levels of specificity. Some sections seem to depend on other lists in EN, such as Ezra 10:18–44. Additionally, the towns in the list belong primarily to Benjamin's territory, an area that did not revolt against Babylon and did not suffer major deportation. The names in the heading extend into the mid-fifth century BCE.

There is no reliable way to determine when these units were combined, except for the beginning and conclusion that are deemed to be the work of the book's late

editor(s). Williamson (1985, 23) rightly concludes that it is more effective to focus on when the list was inserted into EN.

To Galling (1954, 149–58) the list represents an authentic list composed in response to Tattenai's request in Ezra 5, hence the late sixth century BCE. Williamson, writing in 1985, represents a widely accepted view at the time: the list was a composite, drawn up largely in the early Achaemenid/Persian period, inserted first into Nehemiah and then copied by EN's major final editor into Ezra 2. Williamson (1985, 32) acknowledges "the important historical testimony" of the lists to "a gradual return by various groups in the first twenty years or so of Achaemenid rule." Both Galling and Williamson date the list to ca. 500 BCE.

Fried (2015a, 142) also dates it to ca. 500 BCE. She compares the list to accounts of *hadrus* in Babylonia, which were government-allotted estates given to groups that were then responsible to pay taxes and provide military service. Stolper (1989a, 85), who analyzes the Murashu texts, writes that such an institution "was a means of extracting taxes for the Achaemenid state. At the same time, it was a means of insuring and extending the agricultural basis from which state revenues were drawn." Stolper points out that ancient lists identify groups at times by means of "ethnic, territorial, professional, military, and social specifications" (ibid., 70). Fried further suggests that the listed towns represent the deportees' origins (not the towns to which they returned). Since these towns were occupied during the Iron Age II period (her argument goes), the list does not conflict with the archaeological data for Persian-period Judah (Fried 2015a, 139). The suggestion is attractive given the extent to which records such as the Persepolis tablets register groups by places of origin, but the tension with archaeological data remains unresolved.

Other scholars date the list to the late fifth century BCE (Mowinckel 1964a, 98–109; Blenkinsopp 1988, 83; Grabbe 1998, 157). The later date, Blenkinsopp (1988, 83) suggests, would explain the presence of the more than two thousand members of the Bigvai group, whose name is Persian (see also Laird 2016, 20). Finkelstein (2018) considers the geographical information in the list to reflect the Hellenistic period, since archaeological evidence indicates that many of the listed sites were resettled only in that period.

Laird (2016, 90) represents a wide-ranging consensus today when she states that while the list includes authentic ancient sources and is not pure fiction (as Torrey [1910] had claimed), "it is likely constructed at a later date from several different sources such as tax or census lists" (so too Blenkinsopp 1988, 83).

Although countless lists from the ANE and the Achaemenid Empire have been preserved, none is quite like that in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. Other lists, be they from Persepolis or Elephantine, record the distribution, sale, or acquisition of provisions by individuals or groups (see the summary of such lists in Elephantine, *TAD* C, p. 72). They do not usually list names for demographic purposes or census.

One list from Elephantine can shed light on stylistic elements and the content of Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. Dated 400 BCE, this Aramaic list (*TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22) records contributions, mostly by Judeans, to their temple in Elephantine. The long list records names of more than 130 women and men, each with patronym (e.g., *TAD* C 3.15.132) or matronym (e.g., *TAD* C 3.15.129). The heading explains, "This is (= these are) the names of the Jewish garrison who gave silver to YHW the God each person sil-

ver [2] shekels" (*TAD* C 3.15.1; Porten and Yardeni translation). The list includes shifts in tabulation, different tallies, and erasures indicating expansion.

The fact that Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 refers to groups, not individuals, and claims to account for people, not funds, differentiates it from *TAD* C 3.15. But the latter illuminates some scribal practices in the Persian period that are germane for studying Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. The fact that *TAD* C 3.15 shifts from systematically recording names (lines 2–122) to a summation (lines 123–28) and then back again to names (lines 129–35), and incorporating an odd Demotic list of places, then shifting again to a list of names (lines 136–38), illustrates how a single document incorporated additions. Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 can be supposed to have done likewise.

What are the purposes of the list in the final version of EN?

The most obvious and undisputed purpose of the list(s) is legitimation. EN claims that all the listed groups rightfully constitute the restored Israel. As Fried (2015a, 137) rightly observes, the debate about those who could not prove their origin as Israel (Ezra 2:59) confirms that the others in the list could and did prove their belonging. Aside from affirming cohesion, the authors are likely disputing competing claims, possibly by "peoples in the land," including those in Samaria. Within the book, the list and its repetition, however, specifically unify the three stages of rebuilding (of the temple [Ezra 3–6], people [Ezra 7–10], and city [Neh 1–7]) and highlight the role of the people as chief human protagonists.

The authors show that Benjamin also belonged to renewed Israel. In Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, major towns in Benjamin align themselves with the Jerusalem-centered community. The list may have legal as well as economic implications, perhaps being used for imperial taxation, contributions to the temple, and similar purposes. But in EN, it also empowers those represented to serve as legitimate actors in the community. This is most obvious in the case of priests and Levites, but also is evident in the pledge in Nehemiah 10, which includes some leaders from Ezra 2:2 // Neh 7:7.

For Dyck (2000, 130, 142–45), the list reproduces ideological tensions between two groups: those who promote an "egalitarian" model and are mostly concerned with boundaries in relation to outsiders and those concerned with differentiation within the community. Dyck concludes that although the list distinguishes between exilic and nonexilic groups, it is an act of ideological "reconciliation" between such groups (ibid., 145).

Williamson (1989) likewise considers the list to combine equally those who returned and those who remained. According to Laird (2016, 104–5), the list "stitches together exilic status with Judean ethnicity as necessary for membership even as it incorporates many for whom such a status is fictitious." Establishing unity includes establishing boundaries, which Laird links with a minority's survival needs (ibid., 105; see also Brett 2019, 79, for the list's unifying feature). Laird adds another perspective. Observing that towns in Ezra 2:21–34 are situated in Benjamin, she points out that nine of these towns have priestly or cultic associations elsewhere (Kiriatharim, Chephirah, Beeroth, Anathoth, Bethel, Harim, Nebo, Netophah, and Azmaveth). Referring to the first four, Laird (2016, 96) concludes, "The inclusion of these four towns in the list may paper over historical differences by sweeping all citizens under the umbrella of 'returnees.'" She continues: "claims based on exilic lineage now undermine those based on

long term residence" (ibid.). However, these "neatly delineated groups begin to mingle in both ideological and concrete terms" (ibid., 97). She rightly observes that "not all those included in the return are known by descent but rather by where they settled and that citizens living in these sites came to be known as organically linked clans" (ibid.).

Although Laird does not pursue the following line of reasoning, her observation about cultic centers may bear on why these towns, and the district of Benjamin, are particularly important in this context. Reestablishing Jerusalem as the central temple site was bound to undermine other cultic centers. By including members from potentially competing sanctuaries, the list expresses consent between what otherwise might be perceived as warring factions. It further underscores Jerusalem's status as the only legitimate cult center.

But the list accomplishes still more. Torrey (1910) is in a minority among commentators in appreciating the list's repetition as a literary device. Presuming that EN is the invention of the Chronicler, Torrey writes that the list was "deliberately repeated by him (to add as much as possible to its importance)" (ibid., 135). The writers use a well-established literary technique to communicate a vision of community and restoration.

One must add to Torrey's perception that whereas most ancient histories, including those depicted in the Bible, focus on great individuals accompanied by anonymous supporters, EN inscribes the people as the chief human actors in the reconstruction. Comparing 1 Esdras with EN illuminates this changed perspective. First Esdras is above all a history of great men, Zerubbabel and Ezra. Josephus's version is even more so. While carefully reproducing his source in 1 Esdras, Josephus deletes the list of returnees and explains, "I have thought it better not to give a list of the names of the families lest I distract the minds of my readers from the connection of events and make the narrative difficult for them to follow" (*Ant.* XI.68–69 // XI.iii.10). For EN, the people in the list are essential to the narrative.

CONCLUSION

Finkelstein (2008, 1) is right that the list in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 serves as a cornerstone, but not necessarily for establishing a date for the book (as he supposes). Far from supporting those who seek to divide EN into two books, the list unifies the three stages of return and reconstruction that the list frames (Ezra 3:1–Neh 7:5). The list also expands the definition of who is included as returnees (if Dyck 2000, Laird 2016, and Brett 2019 are correct). In particular, the list establishes these people as the chief human actors in the work of restoration. In so doing, it does not repeat preexilic patterns of what constitutes Israel as a community. Instead, it inscribes a society with a broad range of participation of different groups, including likely latecomers (e.g., Bigvai; so Laird 2016, 95), with numerous leaders and several generations that together successfully build YHWH's house. The list's use in constructing a demographic picture of Persian-period Judah, however, is limited, given uncertainties about its nature. The fuller picture emerges when assessed in conjunction with Nehemiah 1–13.

III.

Building YHWH's House, Stage One: The Temple (3:1–6:22)

Introduction and Structure

Building YHWH's house advances in three stages, each led by diaspora Judeans. Stage One (Ezra 3–6) focuses on the building of the temple in Jerusalem. It unfolds in three steps. First, returning exiles build the altar and lay the temple's foundations (Ezra 3). Second, they confront the obstacle of adversarial outsiders who stop the work (Ezra 4). Third, obstacles are overcome, and the people finish rebuilding the temple in 516/515 BCE (Ezra 5–6). This pattern of "action-obstacles-resolution" repeats in the next two major stages (rebuilding the community in Ezra 7–10 and the city in Neh 1–7).

Several features stand out. First, Ezra 3–6 grants the primary credit for building to the people, in contrast to other accounts of temple buildings in the Bible (1 Kgs 5–7) and the ANE, which credit kings. Second, these chapters focus on the social and political processes, not the physical aspects of the temple and its furnishing (in contrast to reports about Solomon's temple or the tabernacle). Third, Ezra 3–6 largely unfolds by means of reproduced documents, mostly in Aramaic. Fourth, the temple's dedication report is relatively brief (Ezra 6:13–18). Grand celebrations await until the people (in Ezra 7–10) and the city (in Neh 1–7) are restored as well. This suggests that the temple's restoration is only one part of the reconstruction in EN.

With rare exceptions, scholars concur that the temple was founded in 520 BCE and completed in 516/515 BCE. The reign of Darius I (522–486 BCE) was particularly conducive for rebuilding, given Persia's interest in its western region. But scholars debate the nature of the conflict in Ezra 3–6 and the reliability, historicity, and chronology of the reproduced documents, especially given that Ezra 4 seems misplaced.

This section, Ezra 3–6, belongs to the late strata of EN (Williamson 1983). Both 1 Esdras and Josephus rearrange it, creating a more coherent narrative flow that solves some challenges posed by Ezra 4.

The structure of Ezra 3–6 is as follows:

A. Beginning the work: Restoring the altar and cult and founding the temple (3:1–13)
B. The obstacle: Outsiders impede rebuilding the temple (4:1–24) (Aramaic begins at Ezra 4:8)
C. Obstacles overcome: Successful rebuilding of the temple (5:1–6:18) (Aramaic)
D. Celebrating the conclusion of Stage One: Passover/Festival of the Unleavened Bread (6:19–22) (Hebrew)

A. Beginning the Work: Restoring the Altar and Cult and Founding the Temple (3:1–13)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Under Jeshua and Zerubbabel the people restore the altar and sacrificial offerings and then lay the temple foundations (Ezra 3:1–7). They found the temple and celebrate with fanfare (3:8–13) before outsiders (Ezra 4) interrupt the work. Cult personnel in full regalia lead the ceremonies celebrating the founding of the temple. Music and singing fill the air, while the people boisterously rejoice, as well as shed tears, in response to a new beginning.

Ezra 3 implies that the temple's founding took place at the time of Cyrus. But ambiguities in the text, as well as Haggai and Zechariah, point to the second year of Darius as the likely time (520 BCE). Conflicting information in Ezra 5:16 about who founded the temple complicates assessing the historicity of the account.

The structure of Ezra 3:1–13 is as follows:

1. Restoring the altar and cult (according to the *torah* of Moses) (3:1–7)
2. Founding the temple (3:8–13)

1. RESTORING THE ALTAR AND CULT (ACCORDING TO THE *TORAH* OF MOSES) (3:1–7)

3 [1]And the seventh month approached, and the sons of Israel were in towns; and the people were gathered as one man to Jerusalem. [2]And Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his brothers arose, and they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer up upon it burnt offerings as is written in the *torah* of Moses, the man of God. [3]And they set up the altar upon its established settings, for the fear upon them from the peoples of the lands. And they offered up upon it burnt offerings to YHWH, burnt offerings for the morning and for the evening. [4]And they observed the Festival of Sukkoth as it is written, and the burnt offering, each in its day, by number, according to the ordinance for each day in its day, [5]and after that perpetual burnt offering, and that for the new moons, and for all the sanctified appointed seasons of YHWH, and for every one freely offering a freewill offering to YHWH. [6]From day one of the seventh month they began to offer up burnt offerings to YHWH and the temple of YHWH had not been founded. [7]And they gave silver to the quarriers/masons and craftsmen, and food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and Tyrians, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the Sea of Jaffa in accordance with the authorization of Cyrus king of Persia concerning them.

Notes

3:1. *And the seventh month approached, and the sons of Israel were in towns; and the people were gathered as one man to Jerusalem.* The opening sentence is virtually identical with Neh 7:72b–8:1a, where it follows the parallel list to Ezra 2 that frames the entire rebuilding account. Founding the temple is the first step (Ezra 3:1–13); restoring Jerusalem's wall nearly a century later is the last (Neh 1:1–7:5).

the seventh month. September–October. The year is not specified, but soon after Cyrus's decree is implied. The seventh month in the Pentateuch is laden with ritual meanings. Why the seventh month? While actual historical memory may be at work, the emphasis (here and in Neh 8) connects to other events in this month. Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29 designate several holy convocations during the seventh month. Deuteronomy 16:16 mandates pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Sukkoth. First Kings 8:2 and 2 Chr 7:3–10 place the dedication of Solomon's temple also in the seventh month and connect it with Sukkoth. Possibly EN also emulates Babylonian practice. Nabonidus founded a temple in the month of Tashritu, which corresponds to the seventh month here, implying it was propitious for temple building (Hurowitz 1992, 225). EN differentiates named months, which are Babylonian (see Adar in Notes at Ezra 6:15), and numbers, which are distinctly Judean.

approached. The common translation, "arrived" (NJPS) or "came" (NRSV), while possible, is otherwise an unattested use of the *qal* of *n.g.ʿ*. and requires the *hiphil.* Gathering as the month was approaching allows for building the altar in time for sacrifices to resume on the first day (Ezra 3:6).

sons of Israel. That is, the Israelites, usually a gender-inclusive term.

in towns. The question of legal rights to the land in historical Judah remains controversial in today's scholarly circles (see Oded 2003 for a review), but EN shows no explicit sign of conflict over land ownership.

the people were gathered as one man. EN depicts a spontaneous gathering before leaders emerge.

3:2. *And Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his brothers arose, and they built the altar of the God of Israel to offer up upon it burnt offerings as is written in the* torah *of Moses, the man of God.* Two leaders, with members of their community, implement Moses's teaching. Fried (2015a, 154) considers building the altar first problematic, given ANE practices in which the temple had to stand before the altar could be used. But such critical assessment overlooks EN's message. Building an altar immediately upon arrival follows Deut 27:4–7 and recalls the time when the Israelites first entered the land (Josh 8:30–31).

Jeshua son of Jozadak . . . and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel. These two men, without patronymic, head the list of repatriates in Ezra 2:2. Now they emerge as leaders when building the altar and founding the temple. Jeshua comes first here when responsibility is for the cult/altar.

Haggai (1:1) titles Zerubbabel "governor of Judah" (*paḥat yĕhûdâ*) and Jeshua (Joshua) as "high priest" (*hakkōhēn haggādôl*). EN, however, never does. The narrator may wish to downplay their official roles (Japhet 1982, 1983a) or (less likely) finds titles unnecessary in light of common knowledge. Gunneweg (1985, 72) suggests that minimizing priestly and Davidic titles keeps the limelight on Moses.

Jeshua son of Jozadak. For fuller details about Jeshua, see the Notes at Ezra 2:2a. Haggai and Zechariah have "Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest" (e.g., Hag 1:1). EN never refers to Jeshua as "high priest" or even as "Jeshua the priest" (cf. "Ezra the priest" in Ezra 7:11 and Neh 8:9). Several details, however, indicate that Jeshua and his family are the leading priests in EN. The genealogy in Neh 12:1–26 shows that Jeshua's line was the official, decisive priestly line. Eliashib, the only "high priest" in EN (Neh 3:1, 13:28) is a direct descendant of Jeshua (Neh 12:10). Silence about Jeshua's title may indicate that honorific positions and complex hierarchy had not yet been fully developed (in which case the title would be a later expansion in Haggai and Zechariah) or reflect an ideological perspective. Curtailing the status of Jeshua and the ruling priestly house highlights more fully the authority of Ezra and the *torah.*

Zechariah 3 hints at tension regarding the Davidic heir, presumably Zerubbabel. No such tension appears in EN (for details, see "Jeshua" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a).

Jozadak. The name, "Jehozadak" in Haggai and Zechariah, means "Yah is righteous." The *z.d.q.* suggests the Zadokite line, considered the leading priestly lineage from the Davidic period onward. First Chronicles 5:40–41 lists Jehozadak last as an exiled son of Seraiah, and does not include Jeshua. Second Kings 25:18–21 reports that the chief priest Seraiah was killed following the destruction of the first temple; it mentions no surviving descendant. To complicate matters further, Ezra's pedigree in Ezra 7:1–6 presents Ezra (not Jeshua) as a descendant of Seraiah (Ezra 7:1), with no mention of Jozadak. This still leaves unexplained Chronicles' silence about Jeshua.

his brothers. That is, other priestly families.

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel. For the name Zerubbabel, "seed of Babylon," and fuller details about Zerubbabel, see Notes at Ezra 2:2a. Zerubbabel plays a leading role (with Jeshua) in the early stages of the reconstruction. He heads the list of returnees in Ezra 2:2. His secondary position here derives from the task at hand: priestly credentials are more relevant to building the altar. He leads the resumption of the building (Ezra 5:2) and is first in the list that defines the restoration era in Neh 12:1.

Like Jeshua, Zerubbabel appears in EN without his title ("governor" according Hag 1:1) or lineage (Davidic according to 1 Chr 3:19). First Esdras identifies him as David's descendant and the only other central figure in the restoration aside from Ezra. In EN, however, Zerubbabel works side by side with Jeshua, has no royal connections, and, like Jeshua, disappears without fanfare (see Japhet 1982). Messianic expectations connected with him in Haggai 2, and in cryptic references in Zech 6:9–15, do not appear in EN.

Shealtiel. Zerubbabel's father in EN, Haggai, and Zechariah is replaced in 1 Chr 3:17–19 by Pedaiah, with Shealtiel as Zerubbabel's uncle. Chronicles does not mention Shealtiel's descendants.

his brothers. Fried (2015a, 157–58) supposes a reference to members of the royal family. Japhet (1982, 84), however, cogently argues that Zerubbabel's kin are Judeans in general rather than his immediate household. EN consistently emphasizes a broad sense of kinship to strengthen mutual responsibility. Nehemiah, for example, urges the nobles to recognize less affluent members as their brothers (Neh 5:7–8). Such use of "brothers" for the Israelite or Judean community is common throughout the Bible (Gunneweg 1985, 72).

and they built the altar . . . to offer up upon it burnt offerings as is written in the torah *of Moses.* Deuteronomy 27:4–7 requires building an altar upon entering the land, and the Israelites do so (Josh 8:30–31). Here, the first cultic practice is done in accord with the *torah* of Moses. The emphasis establishes the *torah* as the defining source of authority for the community even though it is still under the auspices of the Persian king.

to offer up upon it burnt offerings. The English cannot capture the word play in this phrase, which in Hebrew is formed by three words, all of them variations of the same three letters: *ʿ.l.w.: lĕhaʿălôt* (lit. "to bring up"), *ʿālāyw* ("upon it"), and *ʿōlôt* ("olah offerings").

burnt offerings. The LXX uses *holokautōseis,* "whole burnt offerings," from which the term "holocaust" is derived. Milgrom (1991, 172–73) calls it "whole offering." This is the most common offering in EN, and the most basic sacrifice in Leviticus and Numbers, assigned to virtually every special public occasion. The *ʿōlâ* sacrifice is entirely burnt as a dedication to God (see ibid., 133–76). It can be propitiatory or a thanksgiving but also a generic term for any offering totally consumed by fire.

as is written. Heb. *kakkātûbh.* This formulaic expression refers to interpretation in accordance with authorized writing. It does not imply a direct quotation. In fact, it often modifies an inherited tradition and interprets the "gap" between sources of authority and contemporary circumstances (Fishbane 1988, 137–38, 262–64; Edenburg 2019; Yoo 2017, 70–78; Lange 2005). Of the sixteen biblical examples, five are in EN and seven in Chronicles. The formula is used for broadening legislation (Neh 13:1–3), merging legislation (Neh 10:32), closing a gap (Neh 10:36), or creating a new precedent (Neh 10:35).

in the torah *of Moses.* This first of many references to the *torah* governs cultic activities. As a written text, the *torah* in EN features as God's teaching, reckoned as the most authoritative and binding source for membership and action. The writer insists that Moses's cultic instructions were available from the earliest stages of the reconstruction. In Nehemiah 8 and 10, other major facets of communal life are shaped in accordance with the *torah,* not just the cult.

torah. LXX: *nomos;* usually translated as "law" (NRSV) or (better) as "Teaching" (NJPS). The word *torah* refers to a broad spectrum of instructions. It EN, *torah* carries the technical meaning of an authoritative written text. A wider semantic range elsewhere includes Prov 1:8 and 6:20, where *torah* refers to what the mother imparts. In Hag 2:11, *torah* refers to priests' oral teachings. In Leviticus, it can refer to specific rituals, as in "this is the *torah* of the burnt offering" (Lev 6:2; NRSV 6:9). But in Deuteronomy it refers to the document that Moses bequeaths the Israelites, that is, Deuteronomy itself (Deut 31:9). EN typically ascribes the *torah* to Moses (as here) or God (see Ezra 7), as the authoritative written source that guides communal action.

The *torah* in Ezra 3 accounts for cultic instructions that conform to passages in Leviticus and Numbers but now are applied to the temple, not the tabernacle. There is no scholarly consensus about the scope of EN's *torah* or about the scope of the Persian-period Pentateuch (see, e.g., Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid 2016 for extensive, yet inconclusive, discussions about the formation of the Pentateuch). EN alludes periodically to material known from Pentateuchal sources, mostly Deuteronomy, which Neh 13:1–3 practically quotes. But on occasion EN attributes to the *torah* instructions

that the Pentateuch does not include (such as the particular cultic divisions in Ezra 6:18, or the expulsion in Ezra 10:3). Some scholars conclude that EN's author had access to the Pentateuch largely as we know it (Japhet 2016), but others hold that the Pentateuch that we have had not yet been fully formed (Rendtorff 1984; Fried 2014; see further Yoo 2017, 1–31; and Notes and Comments at Ezra 7:1–10).

Moses, the man of God. In Deut 33:1, "Moses the man of God" blesses the people. Moses features ten times in EN, always in connection with the cult or the *torah* (here and in Ezra 6:18; 7:6; Neh 1:7, 8; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:30 [ET 29]; 13:1), but only here does he have this designation. The one other "man of God" in EN (Neh 12:24, 36) is David, in connection with the cult and liturgical music.

Joshua 14:6 mentions "Moses the man of God" as authoritative when Caleb claims his rights. First Chronicles 23:14 links "Moses the man of God" with instructions about cult personnel. The invocation of "the *torah* of Moses the man of God" in 2 Chr 30:16 deals with the somewhat problematic case of the second Passover (Japhet 1993, 950). Possibly, then, the expression is invoked to authorize controversial measures.

The "man of God" in the Bible appears most often in the book of Kings (fifty-eight times of the total of seventy-five for the entire Bible). It typically refers to prophets, including Elijah and Elisha.

3:3. *they.* The people and their leaders.

set up the altar. Altars in the Bible and the ancient world came in different sizes and material. According to 2 Chr 4:1, the altar in Solomon's temple was 20 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 10 cubits high (roughly 30 by 30 by 15 feet) and was made of bronze. The Pentateuch envisions something more modest: "You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it . . . ; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it" (Exod 20:24–25).

The instructions for the tabernacle's altar are different: "You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and it shall be three cubits high. You shall . . . overlay it with bronze" (Exod 27:1–2).

established settings. The LXX and Syriac have a singular form. Williamson (1985, 40) has "original site." EN stresses legitimacy by stating that the altar was restored to its original location.

for the fear upon them from the peoples of the lands. Lit. "for in fear/dread" (also possible, "of some from the peoples of the lands"). The Hebrew syntax "for in fear" is awkward but not uniquely so (see 2 Chr 16:10). The LXX follows the MT. First Esdras 5:50 modifies and offers a different meaning: "And some joined them from the other peoples of the land. And they erected the altar in its place, for all the peoples of the land were hostile to them and were stronger than they."

fear. This word evokes the dread that the Egyptians experienced with the plagues (Exod 15:16) and the inhabitants of Canaan at the prospect of the Israelites' assault (Josh 2:9).

the peoples of the lands. People(s) of the land(s) reappear in EN as adversaries (Ezra 4:4) or dangerous marriage partners (9:1–2). Fried (2015a, 165) observes that "the peoples of the lands" in the Hebrew Bible refers "always to foreign people" and sees no indication that EN employs the expression differently (but see the Comments below). Ezra 4:1–5 mentions foreigners, settled by the Assyrians. Foreign groups, Samarians

among them, malign the Judeans to the king (4:9–10). Ezra 9:1–2 ascribes to "peoples of the lands" abominations like those of the early Canaanites but without specifying their national or ethnic identity. Nehemiah mentions Tyrians (Neh 13:16), as well as Ashdodites, Ammonites, and Moabite women (13:23). The persistent opponents in EN are Samarians (Knoppers 2013, e.g., 138–39; Hensel 2020).

A number of scholars conclude that the "peoples of the lands" in EN includes as well Judeans in the land (e.g., Grabbe 1998, 133; Eskenazi and Judd 1994; Southwood 2012); but Fried (2015a, 165) disagrees. Silence about Judeans in the land in Ezra 3 produces the impression that only the returnees represent the historical Judah and Israel (but see Notes at Ezra 6:21, where others join the builders). What is evident is that Ezra 3 does not consider the land empty (on the so-called myth of the empty land and its rebuttal, see Oded 2003; see further "Peoples of the Lands" in the Comments on Ezra 3:1–7 and Comments [9:1–15] below).

they offered up. Zechariah 3:1–10 reflects a concern about the purity of the reestablished priesthood and cult and envisions a ritual of purification for the high priest. See also Ezek 43:18–26. Ezra 3 glosses over such matters here, first referring to purification when the temple is restored (Ezra 6:19–21).

burnt offerings for the morning and for the evening. The cultic practices largely correspond to those in Numbers 28–29 and may depend on them.

3:4. *And they observed the Festival of Sukkoth as it is written, and the burnt offering, . . . according to the ordinance for each day in its day.* Ezra 3:4–6 describes sacrificial offerings for the various occasions. Repetition suggests some expansion of the account. The emphasis on the full-service cult focuses on offerings that pertain to the community as a whole.

Sukkoth. Sukkoth, meaning "booths," refers to a pilgrimage festival of seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the seventh month. Exodus 23:14–17 introduces Sukkoth as "the feast of gathering," one of three pilgrimages to the sanctuary. EN mentions it twice, at key points: at the beginning of cultic life here and at the climax of celebration beginning in Neh 8:13–18, framing with Sukkoth the reconstruction of religious life. In Zech 14:16–19, Sukkoth marks the culmination of Jerusalem's purification. First Kings 8:65–66 and 2 Chr 7:8–9 associate Sukkoth (where it is unnamed) with temple dedications (see further at Neh 8:14–17).

The emphasis on daily sacrifice on Sukkoth in Ezra 3 reflects the book of Numbers in contrast to Nehemiah 8, which emphasizes reading the *torah* (as per Deut 31:10) and the building of booths (as per Lev 23:39–43). Differences between Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8 have contributed to theories about the formation of the *torah* as well as the history of this festival.

as it is written, and the burnt offering, each in its day, by number, according to the ordinance for each day in its day. Note the recurrent emphasis on following the written instructions. Mention of "each day in its day" points to Num 29:12–34, which prescribes offering thirteen bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs for the first day, with one less bull each subsequent day, down to seven bulls on the seventh day, totaling seventy bulls for Sukkoth. Passover requires a total of only fourteen bulls for the entire Passover week.

3:5. *perpetual burnt offering.* Heb. *ʿōlat tāmîd.* Exodus 29:38–42 and Num 28:2–8 spell out rules for the *tāmîd* offering as a daily sacrifice, offered once in the morning and

once at twilight. Each consists of a year-old lamb, a measure of grain offering, and wine libation (see also Ezek 46:15). Numbers 28–29 lists the *tāmîd* offering first in its lengthy section about sacrifices and incorporates it into each of the subsequent holy days.

Chronicles indicates that this sacrifice had been disrupted but restored after periods of neglect (see 2 Chr 24:14; 29:7, 27–29). The ongoing significance of the offering is apparent in Dan 11:31 as well.

new moons. The Hebrew term, related to *ḥādāš,* meaning "new," is also used regularly to simply mean "month," as is fitting in a primarily lunar calendar. This monthly holy day features prominently as one of the two major holy days in prophetic texts, Shabbat being the other (see, e.g., Amos 8:5, Isa 1:13, Ezek 46:1). The story about David and Jonathan reflects a special meal on this occasion (1 Sam 20). See also 2 Kgs 4:23, where a husband wonders, "Why go to him [the prophet] today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." Yet the Pentateuch gives few details about the New Moon, with Num 29:6 the only explicit reference, noting *ʿōlâ, minḥâ,* and libation for the occasion. The New Moon (typically called Rosh Hodesh today) continues to be demarcated and celebrated in Judaism, in some circles particularly by women and with new rituals.

for all the sanctified appointed seasons. First Esdras 5:52 adds "the sabbaths," a reference that Ezra 3 surprisingly lacks.

for every one freely offering a freewill offering. The Bible does not designate a specific "menu" for "freewill offering" (*nĕdābâ*). This offering refers to any contribution stemming from personal generosity, fulfilling a vow, or any other form of personal piety (Milgrom 1991, 419). Leviticus 7:16 mentions the *nĕdābâ* in the context of the *šĕlāmîm,* referring to an offering shared by the priest and the offerer. But then Lev 22:18 says that an *ʿōlâ* can be a *nĕdābâ,* in which case all the offering is consumed by fire. Milgrom (ibid.) interprets the difference as a conflict between the Holiness Code and the Priestly source. At the very least, then, either an *ʿōlâ* or *šĕlāmîm* can fulfill this role. See also Ezra 2:68, where *n.d.b.* is also used.

3:6. *From day one of the seventh month.* In a style typical of EN (see, e.g., Ezra 7:1–10), a flashback brings the passage about the altar to a close. The narrator briskly reports that the entire sacrificial system was rapidly instituted. Leviticus 23:24–25 and Num 29:1–6 specify practices for that day (no work) and the kinds of animals, grain, and libation to be offered.

and the temple of YHWH had not been founded. A number of translations (e.g., NRSV) have "but the temple," highlighting a likely emphasis on contrast. Fried (2015a, 170) explains that "but" conveys the idea "that it was unusual to have sacrifices before the temple is built." More likely, Ezra 3:7 implies that although the founding of the temple did not occur, the returnees nevertheless took immediate steps to establish God's house on its place, in accordance with Cyrus's decree.

temple. Heb. hêkhāl. The reference is to the temple per se, usually the sanctuary (as in Dan 5:2, Ezra 5:14 and 6:5), where most direct contact with the divine takes place. In Hebrew and Aramaic, this term can also mean "palace." Ancient temples were complex, with various structures, such as storage chambers, workshops, and courtyards, representing different gradations of sanctity, and usually enclosed by a wall. All of these come under the rubric of "the house of God" or "the house of YHWH" in the Bible. The temple as the shrine itself is typically the central core. Thus, *hêkhāl* in the accounts

of Solomon's temple refers not to the temple complex as a whole but to only a limited area (1 Kgs 6–7, 2 Chr 3–4).

Blenkinsopp (198, 94), like most English translations, understandably sees this sentence as a closure of this first stage. The MT, however, continues the unit through Ezra 3:7, tying the preparations for the temple closely to the restoration of the altar and the cult.

3:7. *And they gave silver to the quarriers/masons and craftsmen, and food and drink and oil to the Sidonians and Tyrians.* In content and style, this verse resembles provisions made for the building of the first temple by Solomon, procuring provisions and staff from Hiram, king of Tyre, to build the temple (1 Kgs 5:15–24), and by David and Solomon in Chronicles (see 1 Chr 22:1–4, 2 Chr 2:2–9). The details most likely reflect common traditions about the first temple as well as actual commercial realities in which Sidon and Tyre provided timber and skilled personnel for building. Ezra 3:7 underscores commitment to building the temple in a sanctioned and traditional manner (i.e., following procedures for the first temple). As the restoration of the altar and sacrifices explicitly followed rules of the *torah* of Moses, so the temple implicitly follows Solomon's.

Although Ezra 3 definitively echoes elements from the building of the first temple in 1 Kings and Chronicles (see Blenkinsopp 1988 for details of the latter), it is significantly distinct from both. The decisive difference pertains to who is building. In 1 Kings and Chronicles, the kings take charge, a standard phenomenon in the ancient world. In Ezra 3 and EN as a whole, the community does. First Esdras, which places some of this material earlier in its narrative, differs in many respects.

gave silver. Silver was the common means of exchange, both as coinage (which was beginning to take hold during the Persian period) and as weight.

quarriers/masons and craftsmen. Heb. *ḥōṣĕbîm* and *ḥārāšîm.* First temple building reports highlight these professionals. First Chronicles 22:2 and 15 mention that stonemasons hewed stones into basic shapes and the craftsmen or artisans did the more detailed work. In 2 Chr 24:12 craftsmen, including craftsmen in iron and bronze, renovate the temple; in 2 Chr 34:11 such craftsmen are paid in silver "to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders, and beams for the buildings." The fifth-century BCE temple to YHW in Elephantine, which most likely resembled that of Jerusalem, had stone columns or "gateways," doors of cedarwood, and bronze hinges (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30, lines 9–11). All these required professionals.

craftsmen. Heb. *ḥārāšîm,* sing. *ḥārāš.* The reference is to skilled workers in metal, wood, or stone (see 1 Sam 13:19; Isa 44:12). In 2 Sam 5:11, King Hiram of Tyre sends such workers in both wood and stone for building David's palace. Such professionals were valued enough to be reckoned among those whom Nebuchadnezzar deported to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:16). See also "Tel-melah, Tel-harsha" in Notes at Ezra 2:59.

Sidonians and Tyrians. The kingdoms of Sidon and Tyre, in Lebanon, were famed in the ancient world for commercial activities, especially seafaring. They also possessed cedars. Friendly contact with these particular neighbors is assumed. In Neh 13:16–24, merchants from Tyre pose a problem for Nehemiah.

cedar trees from Lebanon. The forests in Lebanon produced luxurious cedars, prized for strength, endurance, and fragrance. This timber was used for the first temple as well

(see 1 Kgs 5:20). The Persian-period temple to YHW in Elephantine had cedarwood doors and roof and probably wall panels.

Sea of Jaffa. The city of Jaffa on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean was the nearest port to Jerusalem. Jaffa today is adjacent to Tel Aviv in Israel. During the Persian period, while under Persian rule, it was often controlled by either Tyre or Sidon. Lumber was typically sent directly by sea, with planks tied together and guided as rafts through the waves. First Esdras 5:55 refers to that process: "to bring cedar logs from Lebanon and convey them in rafts to the harbor of Joppa."

authorization. Heb. *rišayôn* refers to documented authority or power, in this case a permit. Found only here in the Hebrew Bible, this term becomes common for official permits later (see, e.g., the Targum to Ruth 4:4).

Cyrus king of Persia. By returning to Cyrus the writer affirms that both building activities and financial arrangements were approved by the royal court. As countless documents from Babylonia and Elephantine show, these types of transactions required Persian authorization. But by returning to Cyrus, the narrator also makes the altar building and the provisions for the temple inextricable parts of a process that will unfold for decades. Cyrus's decree stands as Persian authority for permission to build, whereas the *torah* is the blueprint for how to build YHWH's house, beginning with the altar. Finally, these preparations convey the impression that the builders hastened to carry out the task as quickly as possible.

Comments

Ezra 3:1–7 claims that the people immediately began to restore God's house and the cult according to the *torah.* The information is more ideological or theological than historically reliable and invites further comments on the following: (1) the altar and its meanings, (2) the relation of Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8, (3) the peoples of the lands, and (4) some compositional issues.

THE ALTAR AND ITS MEANINGS

Sacrificing animals is foreign and offensive to modern Western sensibilities and is difficult to reconcile with current notions of spiritually elevating religion. The ancient world, however, understood sacrifices as the most explicit and widespread way to honor gods. In ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, Egypt, and Israel, offering what is precious to a divinity was the hallmark of veneration. Dedicating a portion of meat to the divine acknowledged that taking a life is no casual matter. In practical terms, offerings subsidized cult personnel who were at the service of God or gods (see Milgrom 1991, 2004). They also enabled community members to eat and share meat, often the only meat available to people. While animal sacrifices persisted in the surrounding cultures, they ceased in Judaism with the fall of the temple in 70 CE, in part because sacrifices were permitted only in Jerusalem.

EN is part and parcel of the centralization of sacrificial worship in Jerusalem, but sacrifices and other forms of Judean worship persisted in diverse local settings throughout the exilic and Persian periods (see Jer 41 and 44). Persian-period incense altars from Judah and other cultic paraphernalia point to domestic religious settings (C. Meyers 1988, 2018; Balcells Gallarreta 2017). Elephantine, Samaria, and possibly Bethel had temples dedicated to YHWH.

Sacrifices in EN are all for communal events and strengthen Jerusalem as the site of God's house and worship. The restoration of the cult (and opposition to it) should not be perceived in terms of only piety. At stake are also social cohesion and communal identity. EN (like Deuteronomy) thus shows no interest in private sacrifices for individual transgressions (except in Ezra 10:18–19).

THE RELATION OF EZRA 3 AND NEHEMIAH 8

The virtual repetition of Ezra 3:1 and Neh 7:72 [ET 73] establishes an intimate connection between these two moments in postexilic history: the first step in building God's house (Ezra 3:1) and the culmination in the restoration of the city wall (Neh 7:72).

Ezra 3:1, "And the seventh month approached, and the sons of Israel were in towns; and the people were gathered as one man," is identical to Neh 7:72 [ET 73] except for the addition in Nehemiah of "*their* towns" and "*all* the people." Both passages use the same unusual verb for this type of situation, *n.g.* ʿ., translated as "approached." Both are directly preceded by virtually the same list (Neh 7:5–72 and Ezra 2). Wright (2007, 20) comments, "The presence of this lengthy list in both halves of the book would seem to indicate an intentional literary structure, and thus we may view these chapters as a kind of inclusio in the narrative of the book."

Additionally, both Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8 identify Sukkoth rituals as depending on the written *torah.* While Exod 23:16 and Deut 16:13–15 highlight Sukkoth as a harvest festival, Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8 do not. Instead, Ezra 3 reflects traditions in Num 29:13–38 that delineate extensive sacrifices modified for each day; Nehemiah 8 reflects traditions in Lev 23:39–43 that require booths. It also reflects Deut 31:10–12 about the reading of the *torah* on Sukkoth.

Laird (2016, 121) concludes that while both Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8 claim to be keeping with the written *torah,* "their selective use connotes divergent agendas." To Fried (2015a, 168–69), the differences indicate that the two traditions had not yet been combined. Wright (2007, 20) suggests incipient tension between temple and *torah* but with Nehemiah 8 in no way suppressing the importance of the cult or sacrifices. Rather, EN expands in Nehemiah 8 the means by which the community as a whole can participate, making the reading of the *torah* a cultic event.

THE PEOPLES OF THE LANDS

Each of the three stages of the reconstruction in EN is hampered by an obstacle involving those whom EN identifies as "people(s) of the land(s)." Three formulations of the phrase appear in EN:

1. The singular form of the phrase, "the people of the land," appears only once, referring to people of foreign origin (Ezra 4:4; see the NOTES to Ezra 4:1–5). Elsewhere the phrase consistently refers in the Bible to local inhabitants, at times foreign (Gen 23:7) and at times Judean (Jer 44:21, Hag 2:4, and Zech 7:5).
2. "The peoples of the land" (singular "land") appears in Ezra 10:2, 10:11; Neh 9:24 (with a slightly different form of "people"), 10:31 [ET 30], and 10:32 [ET 31]. Elsewhere in the Bible it refers to local populations in the land in question.
3. "The peoples of the lands" (double plural, as here) appears only in Ezra 3:3; 9:1, 2, 11; Neh 9:30, 10:29 [ET 28]; and 2 Chr 13:9, 32:13. The language indicates multiple nations from or in various lands.

Fried (2006; 2015a, 163–68) observes that "peoples of the lands" throughout the Bible refers specifically to foreigners, but since these references are unique to EN and Chronicles, the conclusion is not as clear. The references prove controversial given the polemical use of the terms in Ezra 9–10. Most scholars suppose that Judah in the Persian period included Judeans and Israelites who had evaded exile (Eskenazi and Judd 1994; Southwood 2012). However, EN seems to regard only the repatriated *gôlâ* community as Israel (Japhet 1983b, 112; Becking 2018, 56; Grabbe 1998, 100), except for Ezra 6:21, which includes those who separated from the impurities of the nations of the land.

EN's silence about Judeans in the land persuades some scholars that EN propagates a "myth of the empty land." This view, fashionable in the 1990s, also claims that the return entailed dispossessing local, legitimate population (so, e.g., Whitelam 1996; Carroll 1998). However, Oded (2003) shows the myth to be a scholarly construct imposed on biblical texts, often with obvious modern political considerations as backdrop. As he notes, EN makes the opposite point: the land is anything but empty. EN wrestles with finding ways to separate from certain people, not take their land (Oded 2003, 63). EN seeks ways for the people to form and preserve communal boundaries and cohesion while living among others, and under foreign rule.

Archaeological studies show that the land was sparsely populated throughout the Persian period. This, prima facie, would weaken arguments about conflict over land rights. However, as Jer 40:10 shows, estates of deported Judeans were available to those who remained in the land. Ideological tension between exiles and those remaining in the land is evident in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 24, Ezek 11:14–21; see the extensive discussion in Rom-Shiloni 2013). Conceivably, ownership of specific land plots was in question, with heirs of deportees demanding former habitations. But extant records shed no light on this particular conflict in the Persian period. EN only objects to including "peoples of the lands" in the restored community; it does not challenge their coexistence in the land. The boundaries it seeks are contingent on the ongoing presence in the land of other groups (for a fuller discussion about the identity of "the peoples of the lands," see Comments [9:1–15]).

some compositional issues

Blenkinsopp (1988, 44) considers Ezra 3:1 the source for Neh 7:72–78a, while both Clines (1984, 45) and Williamson (1985, 29) consider Nehemiah the likely source for Ezra 3:1. Wright (2005, 302–3) calls attention to the interruption by Ezra 3:4a of 3:3b and 4b and the added specificity of 3:6 compared with 3:1. He supposes that after its uniting with Ezra 2, Ezra 3:1–7 was expanded with vv. 1a, 4a, and 6a. Pakkala (2005, 164) regards 3:4–5 as an expansion. Kratz (2005, 59) assumes Ezra 3:1 originally followed 1:11.

2. Founding the Temple (3:8–13)

3 [8]And in the second year of their coming to the house of God, to Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers the priests, and the Levites and all those coming from captivity to Jerusalem, began; and they appointed the Levites from twenty years and upward to orchestrate the work of the house of YHWH. [9]And Jeshua, his sons and brothers,

Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, stood up as one, to orchestrate those doing the work in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, their sons and brothers, the Levites.

[10]And the builders founded the temple of YHWH and they appointed the priests, attired, with trumpets, and the Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise YHWH according to David king of Israel. [11]And they responded with praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, "For he is good. For his generous love is forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted a great shout at the praise of YHWH because the house of YHWH had been founded. [12]And many of the priests and the Levites and the patriarchal heads, the old ones who had seen the first house on its foundation, this house before their eyes, were weeping in a loud voice, and many raised voice with a shout, with joy. [13]And the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the people's weeping because the people were shouting a great shout and the sound was heard far away.

Notes

3:8. *And in the second year of their coming to the house of God, to Jerusalem.* The narrative implies a time shortly after Cyrus's decree (538 BCE). But Haggai (Hag 1:1 and 2:14–19), who dates the founding of the temple to the second year of King Darius, namely 520 BCE, makes better sense, given political and economic developments (see also Ezra 4:24–5:1).

to the house of God, to Jerusalem. The temple has not been founded but the place nonetheless is called the house of God.

the second month. April, some five or six months after the erection of the altar in Ezra 3:1–7 (if the dates are to be correlated). The reference harks back to the beginning of work on Solomon's temple, also in the second month (1 Kgs 6:1), but also fits climate conditions that render April a good season for building projects.

Zerubbabel . . and Jeshua . . . and the rest of their brothers . . . began. The two leading individuals make a beginning, but not alone. EN credits a broad spectrum of the community, not only its leaders, with the achievements of reconstruction.

and the rest of their brothers the priests, and the Levites and all those coming from captivity. This verse makes it clear (more than does Ezra 3:2) that the "brothers" or kin of Zerubbabel are the rest of the community (as Japhet 1982, esp. 84, states).

coming from captivity. Returnees initiate the work of restoration. There is no need to doubt the historicity of such a claim. What remains debatable is whether EN regards only returning Judeans as the legitimate Israel. In my view, EN eventually includes others who join the project of the diaspora (as per Ezra 6:21).

appointed. Lit. "to cause to stand," that is, to put someone formally in a particular position (either physically or socially).

Levites from twenty years and upward. The Levites' task here does not correspond to their roles in the Pentateuch. EN showcases their leadership. Levites will prove prominent throughout EN, despite their small initial number in Ezra 2:40 (on Levites, see Notes at Ezra 1:5 and 2:40). The age of Levites when called to serve varies in biblical sources: thirty to fifty years old (Num 4), twenty-five to fifty (Num 8:9–26), and thirty and older (1 Chr 23:1–4) when David appoints twenty-four thousand Levites "to direct the work of the house of YHWH"; and twenty and older in David's final instructions (1 Chr 23:24–27) and in Hezekiah's time (2 Chr 31:17). Divergences apparently reflect

changing needs and demographics, as well as changed interpretations or responsibilities (from carrying the ark in the wilderness to officiating at the temple). Similarities between EN and Chronicles on this topic most likely reflect postexilic practices and cultic terminology applied to an earlier period. Since only these two books offer details about the cult as a national religious center during the Persian period (EN directly and Chronicles indirectly), it is not possible to assess their historicity in this matter. Instruments that Levites use in Chronicles differ from those in Ezra 3:10–11 (see, e.g., 1 Chr 25:6 and 2 Chr 5:12–13).

orchestrate. Heb. *lĕnaṣṣēaḥ*. The term can mean "to conduct," "to supervise" (NJPS), or "to oversee." It also comes to mean "to win a victory." The best analogy for the Hebrew is "*choreograph*," which in Greek writings occurs in military contexts as well as in musical or liturgical ones (see Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.4, *Oec.* 8.3). The Hebrew term encompasses ceremonial arrangement, like *choreograph* in Greek. "Orchestrate" combines musical, cultic activities with physical arrangements conveyed by the term in the Hebrew Bible. The noun or participle (which the LXX translates as *telos*) appears in more than forty superscriptions in Psalms (see, e.g., *lamĕnaṣṣēaḥ mizmôr lĕdāwīd* [Ps 13:1]). Military associations indicating victory continue in postbiblical Hebrew. In modern Hebrew the title also describes an orchestra conductor.

3:9. *And Jeshua, his sons and brothers, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, stood up as one, . . . the sons of Henadad, . . . the Levites.* These Levitical names appear elsewhere in EN among leading families (see Notes at Ezra 2:40; also see Neh 9:4–5, 10:10, 12:8 and 24). Each case here includes individuals and their families (sons and brothers).

Jeshua . . . Kadmiel . . . the sons of Judah, . . . the sons of Henadad. The MT syntax as well as the relative position and identity of these named individuals are unclear. Several scholars and translations seek to reconcile the name(s) with Ezra 2:40, which mentions Hodaviah among Kadmiel's descendants. Furthermore, since the word "sons" (*bānāyw*) can be vocalized "Binnui," some therefore translate "Kadmiel and his sons Binnui and Hodaviah" (NJPS). Williamson (1985, 40) prefers "Jeshua with his sons and brothers, Kadmiel, Binnui, and Hodaviah." Blenkinsopp (1988, 99), however, has "Joshua with his sons and kinsmen Kadmiel, Bani, and the sons of Hodaviah." First Esdras has yet another variation. The MT, however, is possible and should be retained, especially since the LXX follows it.

Jeshua. This Jeshua is a Levite, not the priest Jeshua son of Jozadak.

Kadmiel . . . Judah. See Notes at Ezra 2:40 // Neh 7:43. Kadmiel and his family appear only in EN and in three other cultic ceremonies (in addition to the list of returnees); they lead the communal prayer (Neh 9:4–5), sign the pledge (Neh 10:19), and march in the grand celebration at the end (Neh 12:8, 24). Judah here is likely the Hodaviah in Ezra 2:40 // Neh 7:43.

Jeshua and Kadmiel of the house of Hodaviah are the only named Levites in the list of the seventy-four Levite returnees (Ezra 2:40 // Neh 7:43). The significant role of this small group is thus illustrated twice. The present account underscores the Levites' power.

as one. The builders' unity of action and purpose is important to EN. The emphasis may be polemical and in tension with actual historical reality.

those doing the work. Lit. "the one doing," plurality seen as a collective.

Henadad. The name appears only in EN, twice among the builders of the wall (Neh 3:18, 24) and once as signing the pledge (Neh 10:10). The Masoretic notation shows a break before the reference to this family, and several translators omit or bracket this reference. First Esdras 5:58, however, includes it and elaborates: "Emadabun and the sons of Joda son of Iliadun, with their sons and kindred, all the Levites, pressing forward the work on the house of God with a single purpose." Possibly the family became prominent and inserted at a later point.

3:10. *And the builders founded the temple of YHWH and they appointed the priests, attired, with trumpets, and the Levites sons of Asaph with cymbals.* Ezra 3 conjures up a dazzling array of cult personnel about to burst into song. No such elaborate festivities are recorded in Ezra 6 when the temple is finally built. Instead, comparable ceremonies take place only after Jerusalem's walls are restored at the time of Nehemiah. Several of the details recur in Nehemiah 8–12, especially the emphasis on music and full cultic regalia (Neh 12:27–41) and the psalms of praise (Neh 12:24 and Ezra 3:11 below). These connections underscore EN's overarching thesis that the house of YHWH, founded in Ezra 3, reaches completion only when Jerusalem's wall is also built (Neh 1–7).

Several elements in the festivities in Ezra 3:10–11, including the recourse to psalms, recall the building of the first temple and also King David's bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6 and esp. 1 Chr 16). But whereas Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles place the king in the foreground, EN foregrounds the roles of the people.

and they appointed. The builders appear to be the subject of the verb, but the Levites of Ezra 3:8–9 may be intended instead.

attired. The LXX follows the terse MT. The NRSV adds "in their vestments" (so too Williamson [1985, 40] and Blenkinsopp [1988, 99]). Fried (2015a, 177) prefers "equipped." The priests appear in full regalia. Contributions to the house of God included priestly garments (Ezra 2:69, MT Neh 7:69 [ET 7:70]). Exodus 28:1–41 describes in detail the sumptuous clothing of priests (see the Notes at Ezra 2:69 for details). No other clothes in the Bible receive comparable attention. In the absence of indigenous kings, pomp and circumstance are invested in leading priests.

with trumpets. Numbers 10 designates trumpets as the prerogative of priests to use to assemble the Israelites in times of war (Num 10:9) or holy convocation (Num 10:10). It describes them as hammered silver. Fried's (2015a, 177) preference for "bugle" captures their comparable function in modern settings. EN includes trumpets only in its two key celebrations: the founding of the temple here and the final dedication after the restoration of Jerusalem's wall (Neh 12:35, 41), framing the intervening stages of rebuilding. Trumpets feature most frequently in Chronicles' celebrations: they accompany the arrival of the ark in Jerusalem (1 Chr 13:8), the dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chr 5:12), and the rededication in Hezekiah's time (2 Chr 29:26–28). Chronicles typically includes other instruments such as harps, lyres, or timbrels, which EN does not. Josephus claims that Moses invented the trumpet, which was made of silver: "In length it was little less than a cubit. It was composed of a narrow tube, somewhat thicker than a flute, but with a mouthpiece as was sufficient for admission of the breath of a man's mouth: it ended in the form of a bell, like common trumpets" (*Ant.* III.12.6 // 3.291). Trumpets have a long history, dating back to at least 1500 BCE. Two have been found in the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun, one of hammered silver, the other

of mostly copper. One is about 58 centimeters long, and the other about 50. Ancient Greek trumpets, called salpinx, are much longer, at around 1.5 meters.

sons of Asaph. These Levites have special musical tasks; see Ezra 2:41.

cymbals. These appear only here and in Neh 12:27 in EN, another link between the beginning and the conclusion of the reconstruction. In Chronicles this musical instrument accompanies many cultic celebrations. These saucer-shaped metal instruments (copper in 1 Chr 15:19) come as pairs. Small ones for fingers have been excavated in Megiddo (King and Stager cited by Fried 2015a, 180). For a related musical instrument, see 2 Sam 6:5, which parallels 1 Chr 13:8.

to praise YHWH. The verb designates the practice of cultic praise, typically referring to reciting psalms.

according to. Lit. "on the hands." "Hand" in EN and other biblical texts communicates authority, power, or influence rather than a physical object (see Notes at Ezra 7:6). Williamson's (1985, 41) "in the manner prescribed by" conveys the meaning well. Chronicles uses this expression often in connection with David and liturgical music (1 Chr 6:16; 25:3, 6; 2 Chr 23:18).

David king of Israel. Ezra 3 legitimates current practices as originating in Israel's past, authorized by its most venerable figures: Moses (Ezra 3:2) and David (here and in Neh 12:46). But only here in EN is David titled king of Israel. David rarely appears in EN, in sharp contrast to Chronicles, where he looms large throughout the book, especially in connection with the temple. David appoints Asaph in 1 Chr 16:7 (which may depend on Ezra 3:10). Both EN and Chronicles present David differently from the book of Samuel, depicting cultic administration as his major contribution (see Ezra 8:20; Neh 12:24, 36, 45–46). In Ezra 8:20 and Neh 12:46 he appoints singers and other cult personnel. His name elsewhere in EN marks a geographical location (see, e.g., Neh 3:15–16). David's name is written in the plene (with the *yod)*, typical in late biblical writings (Japhet 2019, 126).

3:11. *And they responded with praise and thanksgiving to YHWH, "For he is good. For his generous love is forever toward Israel."* Fried (2015a, 177) omits the quotation marks, whereas both Williamson (1985, 41) and Blenkinsopp (1988, 99) identify a quotation. Y. Rabinowitz (1984) has "and they sang responsively with exaltation and thanks to HASHEM, for it is good, for His benevolence towards Israel is eternal" (109). Psalm-like songs of praise are familiar from other late Jewish writings, including the Hodayot literature from Qumran.

they responded. The subject of the verb is once again the entire people. Williamson's (1985, 41) "they sang antiphonally" and Fried's (2015a, 177) "they sang responsively" nicely capture in English the more ambiguous Hebrew.

with praise and thanksgiving to YHWH: "For he is good. For his generous love is forever." Ceremonial reciting of praise characterizes several events in EN and Chronicles, and in postbiblical rituals, extending from these to synagogue and church worship. "Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; for his *ḥesed* is forever" recurs in several Psalms (Pss 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 136:1; see also 106:4–5 for a close parallel). Interestingly, these specific psalms do not name David in their superscription. This phrase appears in David's ark narrative (1 Chr 16:34) and with a similar formulation at the inauguration of Solomon's temple (2 Chr 5:13 and 7:3). The latter, like Ezra 3:10, retains some linguistic ambiguity as to where the quotation begins, if it is a quotation. The expression here

refers to a type of psalm attributed to David rather than to any one particular canonical psalm.

thanksgiving. Heb. *bĕhôdōt,* which can be read as a noun or a verb. The imperative *hôdû* appears repeatedly as "give thanks to YHWH for he is good" (Pss 106:1, 107:1, 118:1 and 29). Possibly, "thanks" here is a shorthand for identifying such praise language or psalms. The closest parallel is 2 Chr 7:3.

generous love. Heb. *ḥesed.* The LXX has *eleos,* "mercy." The Hebrew word *ḥesed* has no adequate English equivalent. It refers to generosity beyond the call of duty (see Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky 2012, xlviii–xlix). It is often translated as "loving kindness," "faithfulness," "steadfast love," or "loyalty'" and interpreted as covenantal love. But examples of it, such as in the book of Ruth, point to love that exceeds covenantal expectations.

toward Israel. No other praise psalm listed above includes this concluding phrase. It identifies the builders as "Israel."

And all the people shouted a great shout at the praise of YHWH because the house of YHWH had been founded. Heb. *tĕrûʿâ,* a sign of victory, such as Joshua's battle at Jericho (Josh 6:5, 20), is also a loud, joyful sound at special ceremonies (Num 29:1), especially in Psalms (see, e.g., Ps 150:5). Connecting the term with the cultic celebration highlights the centrality of Jerusalem's cult as the new identity marker and basis for communal unity (see Laird 2016, 123–33).

3:12. *And many . . . who had seen the first house on its foundation.* The sight of the new foundations triggers an emotional comparison with the first temple.

on its foundation. Lit. "in its founding," creating some confusion as to which founding is meant, that of the first or of the second temple? The verb "to found" can extend beyond actual laying of the foundations to "being established or set." The MT punctuation implies the established first temple. The LXX seems to make this point with its use of a noun. Yet the unusual use of the word in this instance leads some translators to read against the MT, parsing by connecting the verb to what follows, namely, the founding of the second temple. Thus the NJPS and Koren Jerusalem Bible, which usually follow the MT closely, attach "founding" to what follows instead. Many other translations retain the awkward MT sense.

and many . . . this house before their eyes, were weeping. Some elders respond with weeping, the reason for which is left up to the reader. Which house is before their eyes, prompting tears? The first temple? (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 99, and Fried 2015a, 183) or (more likely) the second? (so Williamson, 1985, 41, with "they saw the foundation of this house"). Haggai also highlights the contrast with the former temple: "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage" (Hag 2:3–4). No architectural information exists for the size or shape of the second temple of the restoration period.

were weeping. Pseudo Rashi assumes the tears were of sorrow, remembering how grand the first temple was. So too Blenkinsopp (1988, 99), who adds (less convincingly) that the first temple "was for them the real Temple." But legitimacy is not the issue. Fried (2015a) regards the tears as a formal aspect of temples' refoundation rituals. She draws attention to the ANE *kalú* ritual for building a new temple when an old one lies in ruins (ibid., 185). But the account in Ezra 3 is shorn of explicit ritual association for the tears.

loud voice. This is the first of five references to "voice" or "sound" (*qôl*) in these two verses.

and many. These presumably include both older and younger people. The latter, with no firsthand recollection of the first temple, can unambivalently rejoice.

with joy. Joy appears twice in this section (here and in Ezra 3:13), once again when the Passover is celebrated after the temple's completion (6:22), and six times in ceremonies in Nehemiah 8 and 12 (Neh 8:12, 17; 12:27, 43 [twice], 44). Both here and in Neh 12:43 the sound of merriment is heard from afar, but with different consequences.

3:13. *could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the people's weeping.* This sound or voice is noted three times, describing a veritable mingling of voices. The language of polyphony brings to life the tremendous energy and array of sounds that would typify such a momentous occasion. The parallel in 1 Esd 5:64–65 is even "noisier": "while many came with trumpets and a joyful noise, so that the people could not hear the trumpets because of the weeping of the people. For the multitude sounded the trumpets loudly."

the sound was heard far away. The sound of joy is heard far away also at the concluding dedication ceremonies in Neh 12:43, another framing detail that connects the beginning with the end of building God's house.

Comments

Ezra 3:8–13 vividly describes how a united community enthusiastically and joyfully founded the second temple. Celebrating the founding of the temple in Ezra 3:8–13 is one of the two grand celebrations in EN. The other (Neh 8–12) follows the completion of the wall (Neh 1–7). The completion of the temple (Ezra 6:14–18) receives more muted attention, highlighting thereby the building of the wall as the final restoration of YHWH's house. Thus, both Ezra 3:8–13 and Neh 12:27–43 depict the joyous gathering, celebrated with cymbals and Levites leading songs of praise inspired by David and priests joining with trumpets (Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:27, 36, 41). Both end with the sound of joy heard afar (Ezra 3:13, Neh 12:43). None of these details appear at the temple dedication or elsewhere in EN. The message is clear: the full restoration of YHWH's house includes the rebuilt temple, the community, and the city. The joy at the culmination outstrips that of the founding (note the fivefold repetition of "joy" in Neh 12:43–44 and the one in Ezra 3:13).

Ezra 3 shows no interest in the physical aspects of the new foundation and its reconstruction. Consequently, one cannot tell whether the present event was much more than a ground-breaking ceremony. Fried (2015a) and Hurowitz (1992) provide a wealth of information about founding temples in the ANE. Fried (ibid., 184–87) delineates practical and ritual procedures that founding a temple on its original site entailed in ANE sources. Yet none of these appear here, not even the expected mention of sacrifices on this particular day.

The most vexing problem that Ezra 3 raises concerns the date and the leaders. Ezra 3 implies Cyrus's reign, with Zerubbabel among the founding figures. Haggai and Zechariah date Zerubbabel's founding the temple in King Darius's second year (520 BCE); Hag 2:18 specifies the twenty-fourth of the ninth month (see also Petersen 1984, 93). Ezra 4:24–5:1 has Zerubbabel resume the work in 520 BCE, not start it.

Moreover, Ezra 5:16 names only Sheshbazzar as the governor who founded the temple. Most scholars concur that 520 BCE is the likely date. Ezra 3, then, seems to compress the time in order to link it to Cyrus's authorization (as does Ezra 5:15–16) and convey the eagerness of the builders.

ANE inscriptions amply preserve information about temple-building procedures and rituals (see Hurowitz 1992; Fried 2003a; Boda and Novotny 2010). Fried (2015a, 185) concludes that the scene in Ezra 3:8–13 "is typical of other ancient Near East foundation ceremonies," except for the omission of prophets and sacrifices. The following comparison, however, highlights fundamental differences.

As Hurowitz (1992) writes, typical ANE elements in the account of Nabonidus's temple building include the following. First, experts locate the old foundations; then "the king rejoices and lays new foundations" (ibid., 86). Next comes a description of the new temple. The king is the chief official. Two lines are devoted to the laying of foundations, and ten describe the building (ibid., 86–87). Rich details illustrate well-established conventions in the founding of temples in Mesopotamia. Fried (2003a, 2015a) further describes the ceremony: the ruler participates and the ritual often follows the prescription of a diviner or prophet. If a new temple is built on the site of an old one, lamentations over the destroyed temple are sung, often by lamentation priests, to placate the gods. In Mesopotamia, the ceremonies include inserting a stone from the old temple into the new (Fried 2003a, 33, and 2015a, 183–86). Fried (2015a, 18–24, 184–87) interprets Ezra 3 specifically as a ritual of rebuilding over a destroyed temple.

Despite Fried's assertion of similarities, however, this information highlights the differences in Ezra's account. Ezra 3 says nothing about the actual building activities or the foundations themselves; we witness only the responses of the participants. No royal figure participates, let alone leads. The priests and Levites act as musicians, and all the people respond to God's praise (Ezra 3:11; see also the concluding threefold reference to the people in 3:13). Thus, Ezra 3 contrasts sharply with Mesopotamian and other biblical accounts, expressing a drastically different ideology.

B. The Obstacle: Outsiders Impede Rebuilding the Temple (4:1–24)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra 4 describes the obstacle that impeded building the temple: adversarial outsiders effectively put a stop to the work until King Darius's second year (520 BCE) by their malicious reports to the king. The polemics is part of a dispute about or with outsiders that appears in each stage of reconstruction.

The narration largely unfolds by means of Aramaic documents in chronological and thematic disorder. Activities during kings Xerxes' and Artaxerxes' reigns (Ezra 4) appear before those during their predecessor Darius's reign (Ezra 5). Scholars have yet to reach a consensus about the origin, date, and nature of the present arrangement. But this much is clear: Ezra 4 is keen to demonstrate harassment by foreigners, most likely Samarians, blaming that harassment (not Judean apathy or disagreement) for delays in rebuilding.

One way to interpret Ezra 4 is as a unit with a thesis, explication, and conclusion. Ezra 4:1–5 introduces the thesis: opposition by outsiders brings to a halt the rebuilding of the temple. Explicating, Ezra 4:6–16 then gives three examples of such opposition (albeit from a later time). Ezra 4:17–24 concludes the account by describing the consequences: the work stopped until the second year of King Darius. Yet Ezra 4 is also an integral part of a unit that extends to Ezra 6:22. Subunits echo and mirror one another in a variety of ways, with Ezra 5–6 undoing, point by point, the sabotage in Ezra 4 (Eskenazi 1988a, 46–60; Mallau 1988; Matzal 2000). First Esdras and Josephus rearrange the sequence to achieve a smoother chronology (see Comments [4:6–24] below). Ezra 4 is structured as follows:

1. Interference by foreign adversaries (4:1–5)
2. Three examples of foreign interference (4:6–16)
    a. First documented example of outside interference during Ahasuerus's reign (4:6)
    b. Second documented example of outside interference during Artaxerxes' reign (4:7)
    c. Third documented example of outside interference during Artaxerxes' reign (4:8–16)
3. Results: Artaxerxes' response stops the work (4:17–24)

I. INTERFERENCE BY FOREIGN ADVERSARIES (4:1–5)

4 [1]And the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the sons of the exiles were building a temple to YHWH the God of Israel. [2]And they approached Zerubbabel and the paternal heads and said to them: "We will build with you, for like you we seek your God, and to him we have been sacrificing since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us up here." [3]And Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the paternal heads of Israel said to them: "It is not for you and for us to build a house for our God, for we together will build for YHWH the God of Israel, as the king, Cyrus king of Persia, commanded us."

[4]And the people of the land were slackening the hands of the people of Judah and frightening them from building, [5]and hiring against them counselors to thwart their plan all the days of Cyrus king of Persia until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Introduction

The joyful sound at the founding of the temple attracts foreign "adversaries" (Ezra 4:1) who successfully impede the restoration of the temple. Ezra 4 blames them for delay until the time of Darius in 520 BCE. This picture contrasts with Haggai, who attributes delays to Judean apathy (Hag 1:2–4). This story about adversaries in 4:2 echoes traditions preserved in 2 Kings 17 about the Assyrian conquest of Samaria and the displacing of Israelites there with foreigners.

First Esdras 5:66–73 largely follows Ezra 4:1–5. Josephus, who places this episode later, labels the opponents, "Samaritans" (*Ant.* XI.84–89).

Notes

4:1. *And the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard.* The narrator introduces the crisis with prejudicial language that casts a seemingly well-intentioned offer as adversarial. The opponents define themselves as foreigners (Ezra 4:2), implicitly from Samaria.

adversaries. Heb. *ṣārîm,* and LXX *thlibontes,* connote oppression, not merely enemies. The label "adversaries" casts the subsequent offer as deceitful. Second Kings 17 and the Assyrian resettlement of Samaria seem to loom in the background. Josephus identifies the adversaries as Samaritans (*Ant.* XI.iv.3 // XI.84–85).

of Judah and Benjamin. These two groups now represent Israel, with Benjamin included in the province of Judah, while others are excluded (for EN's emphasis on Benjamin's role, see the Comments at Ezra 1:5–6 and "Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period" in the Introduction).

heard. Festive acclamations (Ezra 3:13) draw the attention of adversaries. First Esdras 5:66 has "they came to find out what the sound of the trumpets meant." So too Josephus.

a temple. Heb. *hêkāl;* the LXX has *oikon.* The Hebrew refers to the sanctuary itself, the central section of a larger temple complex, or house of God. The specific term "temple" appears in EN in Ezra 3:6, 10 and Neh 6:10 (twice), 11.

YHWH the God of Israel. This appellation appears twice in this opening section (here and Ezra 4:3). It is repeated in the closing section of Ezra 4–6 at 6:21, framing the Aramaic section. The language emphasizes Jerusalem as the legitimate site for worship of Israel's God and carries a polemic intent (see Notes at Ezra 1:3; see also Stahl 2021 for the significance of "God of Israel").

4:2. *Zerubbabel.* The omission of Jeshua's name may be either accidental or a clue to the political and national (as opposed to strictly cultic) focus of the conflict (see below at Ezra 4:3). If he is governor, then Zerubbabel is a royal appointee backed by the empire and vested with authority. This explains why the adversaries approach him. First Esdras and Josephus add Jeshua.

paternal heads. See "paternal heads" in Notes at Ezra 1:5.

We will build with you, for like you we seek your God. The offer seems sincere; however, "your God" implicitly disassociates the speakers from the God of the builders.

we seek. Heb. *d.r.š.,* "seek," can refer to seeking information or to investigating (as in Deut 13:15). It comes to be used increasingly for seeking God or divine counsel. The NJPS and NRSV use "worship," which is too specific.

your God. The reference does not exclude the worship of other gods, with which 2 Kings 17 charges the inhabitants of Samaria. The historical reliability of such charges in 2 Kings 17, which denies the presence of genuine Yahwists in Samaria, is questionable (see Knoppers 2013).

to him we have been sacrificing. The translation "to him" follows the Q, the LXX, and all extant ancient versions. The K, *l',* usually means a negative "no." That would mean that no sacrifices have been made to Israel's God since these people have arrived. In either case, the speakers are claiming piety. Offering sacrifices indicates that they possessed an altar; if so, their worship at an altar away from Jerusalem may be objectionable. This is one of several indications that formal worship of YHWH continued after the destruction of Jerusalem's temple.

Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us up here. The reference points to inhabitants of Samaria. Yet Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) is not credited elsewhere with transplanting foreigners into Samaria. Second Kings 17 credits Shalmaneser (2 Kgs 17:3) with besieging Samaria. After three years the Assyrian king (unnamed but by implication Shalmaneser) conquered Samaria (722 BCE), deporting all the Israelites and replacing them with foreigners (so 2 Kgs 17:5–6). According to 2 Kgs 17:7–41, the resettled foreigners adopted YHWH worship but continued also worshipping their other gods. Ezra 4 seems to follow this tradition since it does not acknowledge genuine Israelites in the area. Ezra 4:10 refers to resettled population in Samaria at the time of Osnappar of Assyria. Second Chronicles, however, implies that the north continues to be inhabited by Israelites after 722 BCE; King Hezekiah of Judah invites them to his Passover (2 Chr 30:1–5). Moreover, King Josiah's reforms in 622 BCE receive support from the (Israelite tribes) Ephraim and Manasseh (2 Chr 34:9).

Assyrian records confirm that Assyria regularly replaced deported population in conquered territories. They also mention deportations of more than twenty-seven thousand from Samaria/Israel by Sargon II (720 BCE; see *ANET* 284–87) but elsewhere credit Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE) with conquering Samaria. An Assyrian prism has Esarhaddon summon King Manasseh of Judah, along with the kings of Edom, Moab, and others (*ANET* 291), but makes no mention of resettling people (see further the Notes at Ezra 4:10).

The evidence points, then, to the historicity of some displaced population in Samaria, but it does not mean that Israelites no longer lived there. Recent studies show material and cultural, and probably religious, overlap between Judah and Samaria during much of the Persian period (Kartveit 2009; Knoppers 2013; Kartveit and Knoppers 2018; Hensel 2016, 2018, 2020), in continuity with the earlier period. EN, like 2 Kings 17, with Ezra 4 as an example, polemicizes the relationship with Samaria. Ezra 4:2 has the opponents identify themselves as foreigners living in the land.

Josephus names Salmanasses instead of Esarhaddon (*Ant.* XI.84–89).

4:3. *And Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the paternal heads of Israel said to them.* The entire leadership (this time including Jeshua) rejects the offer of participation.

said. The singular verb with a plural subject indicates unity of purpose or position, as well as possible insertion of additional names or groups.

It is not for you and for us to build a house for our God, for we together will build for YHWH the God of Israel. The Judeans differentiate two groups, "you" and "us," without spelling out what about the "you" is objectionable. They insist that the task is granted exclusively to them. Bedford (2001, 92) represents the prevalent scholarly explanation: "Despite their claims to the contrary in Ezra 4:2, the neighbouring peoples were not the legitimate worshippers of Yahweh nor, in the opinion of the author, were they included in Cyrus's edict." Interestingly, however, the rebuff does not specify ethnic differences or charge the opponents with corrupt worship (as does 2 Kgs 17). Instead, it invokes legal obligations to Cyrus. Josephus softens the rejection by adding that Zerubbabel and the rest invited the opponents to join in worship once the sanctuary was built (*Ant.* XI.87). Possibly, Josephus has Ezra 6:21 in mind.

EN persistently draws social and religious boundaries; this is the first such step. The categorical rejection here contrasts with a willingness to include others once the

temple is built (Ezra 6:21). Discerning historical reality is difficult (see the Comments below).

together. Heb. *yaḥad.* This differs from the LXX, which has *autoi,* "ourselves." Most English translations follow the LXX and render *yaḥad* as "alone" (KJV, NRSV, and NJPS), as does 1 Esd 5:68, with *monoi,* rightly highlighting the exclusionary sense of the message. But *yaḥad* always means "together" elsewhere (see, e.g., Ps 49:11). It emphasizes unity—here, presumably, of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other Judeans. Building, it seems, unifies the community vis-à-vis the outsiders. Excluding some entails uniting with others. Talmon (1953, 135–39), however, considered *yaḥad* a synonym for "congregation," reflected in the Qumran scrolls.

as the king, Cyrus king of Persia, commanded us. The repetition of "king" underscores royal legitimation. The official excuse is bureaucratic: royal authorization does not include those who are not Israel (see Ezra 1:3). There is no need to suppose that EN here claims that "only the repatriates were the remnant of the kingdom of Judah" (Bedford 2001, 93). Cyrus's decree entrusts the task to all YHWH's people (1:3), which in EN includes the entirety of Judah and Benjamin, not only returnees. The LXX and several English translations omit one of the references to "the king," thereby losing the double emphasis of the MT.

4:4. *And the people of the land were slackening the hands of the people.* Rejection by the builders results in harassment and intimidation.

people of the land. Heb. *ʿam hāʾāreṣ*. The singular form distinguishes this group from that of Ezra 3:3, 9:1, 2, 11, etc., which use the plural "peoples of the lands," and from "the peoples of the land" in Ezra 10:2, 11 and Neh 10:31, 32. The singular appears in the Bible some forty-five times, referring to local inhabitants. Only six of these refer to foreigners: the previous inhabitants of the land (Gen 23:7, 12, 13; Num 14:9) and the Egyptians (Gen 46:6, Exod 5:5). Haggai and Zechariah apply "people of the land" to the Judeans with (not against) Zerubbabel and Joshua (see esp. Hag 2:4 and Zech 7:5). In EN, however, this expression implies outsiders who live in the land.

Attempts to be more specific were made early by Würthwein (1936, 57–64) and continue to this day. Gunneweg (1983) proposes that the meaning of the term changed during the postexilic period to imply the poor of the land. Fried (2006) concludes, conversely, that *ʿam hāʾāreṣ* in Ezra 4:4 are the aristocracy, elite men with power and wealth, specifically high-ranking Persian officials who now, as the new aristocracy, control the land. The subject is persistently examined in studies of ethnicity in EN (e.g., Southwood 2012). The view that they were Samaritans or Samarians features heavily in discussions, especially since the leading opponents in the adversarial letters that follow 4:1–5 are in Samaria. Josephus specifically calls these adversaries Samaritans (*Ant.* XI.88). I suspect that EN wishes to give this impression.

slackening the hands of the people of Judah. Heb. *mĕrappîm yĕdê ʿam* means "caused them to go limp," "undermined the resolve" (so NJPS), or "discouraged" (NRSV). Haggai and Zechariah (conversely) accuse the people of the land in their time (namely, Judeans) of apathy and encourage them to rebuild the temple (Hag 2:4 and Zech 7:5). First Esdras 5:72 intensifies the harassment here, making it also physical.

people of Judah. EN contrasts the people of the land, as outsiders, with those of Judah—either Judeans or residents of the province—solely entrusted with building.

One notes the absence of specific "exile" (*gôlâ*) terminology. The people of Benjamin are presumably included in "Judah" (see Ezra 4:1).

frightening. Heb. *mĕbhalăhîm* (K) of *b.l.h.;* the Q uses the root *b.h.l.,* "to frighten" or "to trouble" (see Williamson 1985, 42 n. 4c).

4:5. *and hiring against them counselors to thwart their plan.* EN claims that the tactics of the opponents involve two distinct moves: intimidation (Ezra 4:4) and maligning reports to the Persian royal administration. Ezra 4:6–16 illustrates these types of interference. First Esdras 5:73 adds "uprising" or "attacks" to the opponents' tactics.

hiring against them counselors. The opponents, EN states, bribed officials. Aramaic texts from fifth-century BCE Elephantine describe similar situations in that community (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30, dated 407 BCE).

all the days of Cyrus . . . until the reign of Darius. Cyrus's decree is presumed to have been issued in 538 BCE, and by implication, the current confrontation takes place during his reign. Darius I took the throne in 522 BCE. Haggai and Zechariah, as well as Ezra 5, place building efforts in 520 BCE and completion in 516/515 BCE (see Ezra 6:15). An identical statement, but in Aramaic, serves in Ezra 4:24 as a resumptive repetition, after an excursus describing disruptive actions under later kings.

Darius. King Darius I (522–486 BCE) seized power after the premature death of Cambyses, son of Cyrus. Sources such as Herodotus, and Darius's own Behistun Inscription (a magisterial carving on a mountain in Iran), confirm that Darius successfully consolidated his power by 520 BCE (Briant 2002, 165–354). Darius plays a major role in Ezra 5–6.

Comments

Ezra 4:1–5 accuses foreign adversaries of sabotaging Judah's reconstruction, stopping work on the temple until King Darius's second year (520 BCE). Ezra 4 as a whole casts Samaria as the source of opposition. While material evidence from Samaria "limited though it is, points to an overlap with Yehud during the late Persian period" (Knoppers 2019, 88), Ezra 4:1–5 distances Judah from Samaria.

Josephus identifies the adversaries with the Samaritans, whom he considers of foreign origin (*Ant.* XI.84). So did most interpreters until the modern era. Williamson (1985, 50), however, who accepts the historical reliability of the scene in Ezra 4:1–3, nevertheless warns against confusing these men with the "Samaritans" of a later period. He disassociates 4:1–3 from 4:4–5 and objects to construing "the people of the land" as Samaria's ruling class. Blenkinsopp (1988, 106–8) regards the adversaries as those who will later be called Samaritans and likewise differentiates them from the people of the land in 4:4–5, whom he considers Judeans in the land. Coggins (1976, 27) accepts the opponents' claim of being settlers brought by the Assyrians but differentiates them from the Samaritans, whom he regards as "a conservative group within Judaism." Fried (2015a, 197) supposes that the Hellenistic redactor assumed that they were Samaritans on the basis of 2 Kings 17, but she regards the opponents as high-ranking officials in the service of the Persian government. Clines (1984, 73), however, differentiates them from the officials in 4:7–23. Grabbe (1998, 137) contemplates that the "adversaries" may actually be living in Judah since nothing precludes this solution and because "the people of the land" elsewhere does not refer to foreigners.

By linking the opponents with "the people of the land," EN conflates two groups—foreigners and "people of the land"—and thereby imputes foreign origin to the people in the land(s) in general (see Clines 1984, 73). Rom-Shiloni (2013, 41–42) holds that the adversarial people of the land are not considered "Judean Yahwists, even Yahwistic Israelites." EN refuses to recognize them as such, making the people of the land describe themselves "as the descendants of multi-ethnic deportees." Reference to Yahwist Israelites makes sense when we consider "the land" in EN to encompass more than just the province of Judah.

Coggins (1976, 27) suggests a genuine wish to join forces. Levin (2018, 95–96) reflects on why these volunteers identify themselves as they do. He notes the pattern in Assyrian deportation and resettlement in which elite and skilled professionals are relocated. Identifying themselves as resettled deportees, the so-called adversaries imply parity with the returnees, who likewise would have belonged to the same general classes (Levin, ibid., 99). As such, they claim shared history and vested interests, which include remaining aloof from the local population.

Why was the offer rebuffed? If 2 Kings 17 is background, then foreign origins and syncretic religious practices would seem the obvious explanations. But Zerubbabel and his cohort do not make this point. Instead, they give two reasons: (1) they themselves were specifically commanded to build by Cyrus, and (2) they together will build (Ezra 4:3). In this way, this section underscores the unity of Judah and Benjamin, and that may be part of its purpose. The Hebrew word *yaḥad* conveys a sense of "exclusive inclusivity." One type of internal togetherness stands over and against another as EN establishes the first explicit set of boundaries.

Scholars generally concur that Ezra 1–6 is a late layer of EN and is based on materials already at hand, including Haggai and Zechariah. Williamson (1983) credits the final editors of the book with compiling this section. If this is the case, then this description comes from a century or more after the events.

As the study of any community redevelopment illustrates, renovations for whatever reasons are met with mixed reactions. We can suppose nothing less in Judah. There are no reasons to doubt that people arrived from the diaspora with royal authorization to build and faced resistance by some local Judeans and their neighbors. The temple benefited priests economically but added a burden to farmers. Persian intrusion into local affairs, reflected in royal authorization, may not have been welcomed. Well-entrenched powers would object to changing the status quo. Add to this the wide cultural gulf that separated those who had lived in Babylon, the center of ancient civilization, with its complex urban and administrative culture, and those in largely agricultural and provincial Judah. Ezra 4, however, concentrates on opposition from Samaria.

Neither we nor the authors of Ezra 4 seem to have sufficient information about what happened before the time of Darius. But we can see what EN's authors accomplish by framing the story in this fashion. According to EN, building the house of God was the work of enthusiastic returnees. Only foreigners opposed it. Ezra 4:1–5 sets up this dichotomy as an introduction to examples of opposition in 4:6–23.

As for "the people of the land," the phrase consistently refers to local population, most often Judeans (see postexilic Hag 2:4 and Zech 7:4). Plural forms of the expression, that is, "peoples of the lands" (or "peoples of the land" as in 1 Kgs 8:53), include

foreigners. In contrast to most other biblical texts, EN conflates the two forms of the expression, singular and plural. It defines the people of the land as foreign. Moreover, by means of juxtaposition (Ezra 4:4 and 4:2), it allows them to define themselves as foreign.

While differentiating the builders from foreign settlers in the land, Ezra 4:1–5 emphasizes the unity of Judah and Benjamin in support of the temple. A united front typifies the book as a whole. Yet we can suspect, both from the text and from plausible historical analysis of the period, that many different vested interests collided during this period around the rebuilding of the temple. EN is forging a notion of national identity (not merely trying to write a good story). The adversaries here, like the adversaries of Nehemiah in Neh 4:5, are therefore cast as confirmed outsiders from whom the reconstructed community must separate.

2. THREE EXAMPLES OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE (4:6–16)

4 [6]And in the reign of Ahasuerus, at the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against those settled in Judah and Jerusalem.

[7]And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his associates wrote to Artaxerxes; and the writing in the document was written in Aramaic and transmitted in Aramaic. [8]Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows. [9]Then Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates the judges, the envoys, the counselors, the Persians, the Erechites, the Babylonians, the Susaites, that is Elamites, [10]and the rest of the nations that the great and noble Osnappar exiled and settled them in the city of Samaria, and the rest of the Across-the-River. And now: [11]This is a copy of the letter that they sent to him:

"To Artaxerxes the king: your servants, the men of Across-the-River. And now: [12]Be it made known to the king that the Judeans who had gone from you came to us, to Jerusalem. They are building the rebellious and wicked city and they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. [13]And now, be it made known to the king that if this city will be built and if the walls will be finished, they will not pay toll-tax, tribute, and levy, and royal revenue will be harmed. [14]Now, because we salt with the salt of the palace and it is not proper for us to see the nakedness of the king, we therefore send and make it known to the king, [15]so that one should investigate the book of memoranda of your ancestors and you will find in the book of memoranda and you will know that this city is a rebellious city and harmful to kings and provinces, and sedition had been at work in its midst from days of old; on that account this city had been destroyed. [16]We make it known to the king that if that city will be built and its walls finished, then you will have no portion in Across-the-River."

Introduction and Structure

EN documents the types of obstacles that the Judean builders encountered by reference to three distinct letters to Persian kings, using these apparently to explain why the work on the temple stopped until King Darius's second year. The information is confusing. All the examples postdate the time of King Darius. The documents shift in Ezra 4:8

into Aramaic and suggest an archival source from which these documents are culled somewhat incompletely.

The first example of outside interference (Ezra 4:6) refers to a hostile letter during the reign of King Ahasuerus (486–465 BCE) without reproducing the content. The second example (4:7) is a report about a letter to Artaxerxes, again, without content. The third example of interference (4:8–16) is in Aramaic. It reproduces a letter to King Artaxerxes accusing the Judeans of sedition. This letter poses several problems. First, it has several confusing introductions (4:8–10); second, like the first two examples, it is anachronistic, referring to events after the time of King Darius in explaining delay before the time of Darius; and third, its content describes opposition to building Jerusalem's walls, not the temple. Most scholars regard it as originating at the time of Nehemiah (see Comments).

The confusing section communicates two clear messages: (1) the delay in rebuilding the temple stemmed from outsiders' opposition, not Judean disunity or apathy; and (2) Judah's neighbors, especially the Samarians, have been hostile from the very beginning.

First Esdras rearranges the material in Ezra 4 in an attempt at a better chronology. Josephus departs from his customary use of 1 Esdras and constructs yet another narrative, without a chronological hitch (see Notes at 4:7 below).

The entire section "evokes a particular image of the nature of the relationship between Samaria and Judah" (Hensel 2020, 1). Hensel (ibid., 2) regards it as "the *locus classicus* for reconstructions of Samarian-Judean relations in the postexilic period," at least as EN constructs them. See the Comments below.

Ezra 4:6–16 is structured as follows:

1. First documented example of outside interference (during Ahasuerus's reign) (4:6)
2. Second documented example of outside interference (during Artaxerxes' reign) (4:7)
3. Third documented example of outside interference (during Artaxerxes' reign) (4:8–16) (in Aramaic)
   a. First heading (4:8)
   b. Second heading, with additional signatories (4:9–11)
   c. The letter itself describing the danger to the king (4:12–16)

Notes

4:6. *And in the reign of Ahasuerus . . . they wrote an accusation.* The first specific illustrative example of interference pertains to King Darius's son, King Ahasuerus (486–466/465 BCE). It describes the hostile letter without reproducing the content. The MT in the Leningrad Codex links Ezra 4:6 with 4:1–5. The fact that this verse is in Hebrew (in contrast to the Aramaic that follows in 4:8) and that it depends for its subject, "the people of the land," on vv. 4–5, encourages such an arrangement. But since it extends opposition to the time beyond Darius, it cannot possibly explain why work stopped during Darius's reign.

Ahasuerus. Named Xerxes in Greek sources (e.g., Herodotus), King Ahasuerus features in the Bible prominently in the book of Esther where he first consents to destroy

the *yĕhûdîm* and then (under Esther and Mordecai's influence) consents to help avert the destruction. The portrait there is at best ambivalent. Daniel 9:1 mentions him in passing.

Greek sources concentrate on Xerxes' unsuccessful campaign against Greece, the account of which occupies a large portion of Herodotus's *Histories.* Ahasuerus was assassinated and replaced by Artaxerxes I.

First Esdras and Josephus omit this verse. Significantly, however, Qumran fragments of Ezra material (4QEzra, fragment 1) preserve precisely a small portion of this section. This demonstrates the antiquity of the MT version and its probable priority with respect to 1 Esdras. The usual principles of text criticism, in which the more difficult text is more likely to be the earlier, also supports its priority.

at the beginning of his reign. Babylonian records reflect political unrest during the early years of Xerxes' reign, with revolts in Babylonia and elsewhere, followed by some reforms in which he curtailed the power of the Babylonian upper class (Jursa 2010; Waerzeggers 2004). Herodotus (*Hist.* VII–VIII) concentrates on Ahasuerus's/Xerxes' disastrous campaigns against Greece. EN's brief reference does not reflect any of these events; EN may be aware of the story of Esther or at least of Mordecai (note a Mordecai among the leaders in Ezra 2:2), but the opposite may also be true (with the book of Esther appropriating EN's Mordecai).

they wrote an accusation. The accusers are implicitly the "people of the land" in Ezra 4:4. Ezra 4 does not reproduce this particular letter.

an accusation. Heb. *śiṭnâ.* This feminine noun appears only here. The masculine form (from which "Satan" is later derived) commonly refers to adversaries (see Ps 71:13, Job 1:6).

against those settled in Judah and Jerusalem. The reference is to residents who belong to EN's community, Judah and Benjamin in Ezra 4:1.

4:7. *And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his associates wrote to Artaxerxes.* The LXX has "and in the days of Arthasastha, Tabeel in peace wrote to Mithradates and to the rest of his fellows. The tribute gatherer wrote to Artaxerxes." This verse can be read as a second documented example of foreign interference, impeding the restoration of the temple. But the verse raises many questions, the answers to which remain inconclusive. Yet much depends on how this verse is understood. Is it a reference to an independent letter that, like Ezra 4:6, is not preserved in EN? If so, did the letter oppose the builders or favor them? Is it, instead, a heading, a superscription for the Aramaic material that follows (Ezra 4:8–24 and perhaps also 5:1–6:18) as Meyer (1896, 8–71) and Steiner (2006) propose? If so, what is the relation to the other heading in 4:8–10? Does *bišlām* mean "in peace" as the LXX renders it, or is it a name, Bishlam, as 1 Esd 2:16 has it? Are there three, two, or one sender(s) in this verse? In spite of the LXX, most interpreters suppose that Mithredath and the others are senders, not recipients, of the letter.

Williamson (1985, 61) interprets this verse as a reference, like Ezra 4:6, to a letter that is not reproduced. The structure of Ezra 4 proposed here reflects this assessment, but it is as plausible to conclude, however tentatively, that the heading introduces the material that follows and represents officials' report to the king that extends at least to Ezra 4:24 and possibly also to 5:1–6:18 (so Steiner 2006). As such, this particular verse

is neither adversarial nor supportive; it introduces what purports to be an even-handed report to the king, providing a "paper trail" of developments in Judah.

First Esdras 2:16 solves some problems by combining this verse with the subsequent verses, making it part of Rehum's adversarial letter.

Josephus reshapes the information, departing from 1 Esdras. Setting this opposition at the time of Cambyses, Cyrus's son, and thus in the expected chronological order, Josephus simplifies but also augments the list of senders. He identifies the writers of the maligning letter as "the governors of Syria and Phoenicia, and in the countries of Ammon, and Moab, and Samaria" (*Ant.* XI.2.1 // XI.19). The multiple introductions thereby disappear and the letter follows in a natural fashion.

Artaxerxes. Heb. *ʾartaḥšaśtʾ* in the MT. The LXX has *arthasastha,* conventionally translated as Artaxerxes. King Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) is to be distinguished from Artaxerxes II (404–358 BCE). The missions of Ezra and Nehemiah take place during the reign of Artaxerxes. Nehemiah evidently refers to Artaxerxes I, but the date of Ezra is disputed (see "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?" in the Introduction).

wrote Bishlam. Heb. *kātabh bišlām.* The LXX has *eirēnē,* "in peace," apparently taking the *b* as the preposition "in," coupled with the Semitic root *š.l.m.* from which "shalom" comes. This rendition could suggest a conciliatory letter, a counterpoint to the letter of Ezra 4:6 ("an accusation") or simply a greeting formula familiar from documents such as the Aramaic Elephantine papyri (e.g., *TAD* A 4.1.1 // Cowley 21). First Esdras takes it to be a name, as do most commentators. Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 42) considers it a West Semitic name known from cuneiform inscriptions. Rainey (1969) mentions a cuneiform tablet dated to the third year of Artaxerxes (462 BCE) that refers to a Belshunu, governor of Beyond the River. Rainey adds that "with great reservations one might suggest that his name appears in corrupted form as Bishlam in Ezra 4:7" (ibid., 58). Steiner (2007) supports reading this as a name, a mistransliteration of the Babylonian name Bel-Shalam. Fried (2015a, 203–4), however, prefers "in peace" because she considers it unlikely that a Babylonian official would have been listed before a Persian one.

Mithredath. This well-attested Persian name refers to various individuals in Achaemenid-period sources: a different Persian official in Ezra 1:8, a eunuch who participated in a plot against Xerxes in Greek sources (Briant 2002, 274–75), and an official in Egypt in 411 BCE in Elephantine (*TAD* A 6.2 // Cowley 26.2). In the LXX, this individual is one of the recipients of the letter, not its sender.

Tabeel. This Hebrew and/or Aramaic name means "God [El] is good" or "the good [or goodness] of God." Isaiah 7:1–7 mentions a son of Tabeel as a contender for Judah's throne in place of Ahaz (Isa 7:6). Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 43) suggests that Tabeel in Ezra 4 was a Judean from Gilead with supporters in Israel and Judah. Kochman mentions an Assyrian letter (British Museum, BM ND2773) with the "land of Tabeel" in south Gilead and considers that this family was perhaps granted official power when Ammon was conquered (e.g., 2 Chr 26:8, 27:5). Possibly, the name was later changed to Tobiah (ibid., 104). A Yahwistic form of this name, Tobiah, recalls Nehemiah's arch opponent (Neh 2). The prominence of the family of Tobiah during the Hellenistic period is well attested in the third-century BCE Zenon papyri and Josephus.

An elaborate theory of a "Tabeel source" was developed by Schaeder (1930, 14–27). Schaeder argued for a "Tabeel source" that extends throughout the Aramaic material to Ezra 6:18 and constitutes "a Memoir" by a Jew (see Williamson's critique, 1985, 58–59). Steiner (2006) revives the basic claim about Ezra 4:7–6:18 as a unified source but develops it differently (see the COMMENTS below). Still, it seems best to conclude that Ezra 4:7 presents Tabeel as one of the senders of a report to Artaxerxes without specifying his identity.

his associates. Aramaic *kĕnāwat,* a common term from an Akkadian root used in Aramaic documents of the Persian period to describe an official administrative group (see, e.g., Ezra 4:17, 23; 5:3, 6, and numerous examples from the Elephantine papyri such as *TAD* A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30.1).

and the writing in the document was written in Aramaic and transmitted in Aramaic. The LXX is considerably different: "The tribute-gatherer wrote to Artasastha king of the Persians a writing in *suristi,* and interpreted." Presumably, *suristi,* "Syriac" or "Syrian," refers to Aramaic. The LXX omits the second "Aramaic," as does the NRSV.

wrote . . . the writing . . . was written. The MT repetition of "writing" clarifies the consistency between script and language. It also underscores the emphasis in the MT on writing, a significant agenda in EN's ideology. Most translations obscure the threefold repetition of "write," *k.t.b.,* in this verse.

document. Aramaic *ništĕwān,* a Persian loan word that means instruction, not necessarily a written one (Williamson 2008, 50; Fried 2015a, 200–201). The LXX translates it as "tribute-gatherer" (here and in Ezra 4:18).

Aramaic. This northwest Semitic language was used widely during the Persian period. Its alphabetical nature and script made written communication easier than the earlier Akkadian. Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the Achaemenid administration, evident, for example, from the Elephantine papyri and Bactria (near today's Afghanistan)—locations separated by thousands of miles. Yet the linguistic practices of the Achaemenid court are complicated. Tens of thousands of tablets from Persepolis (dated 509–494 and 492–458 BCE) are in Elamite, with relatively few Aramaic texts. Many come from the time of Artaxerxes I, the implied time of Ezra 4. In addition, while most of the monumental inscriptions from the Achaemenid period are trilingual, very few include Aramaic; the Xanthos or Letoon Trilingual Inscription (mid-fourth century BCE) is one of the few (Kuhrt 2007, 859–63). Cameron (1948, 21), in his study of the Persepolis tablets, observes that orders by the king or Persian officials "concerned with distribution of funds from the Treasury already written in Aramaic on parchment, were translated into another tongue before they were entered on the account books of the Parsa treasurer" (see also Henkelman 2017). He adds that some "Old Persian orders were first transcribed into Aramaic characters before the Elamite translations themselves were made" (ibid., 20).

Elamite, then, was the language for record keeping in Persepolis, and Akkadian cuneiform or Aramaic in Babylonia (Cameron 1948, 22). Cameron also concludes that Old Persian was the actual language of the court (ibid., 20). Yet bowls, mortars, and pestles from the Persian period were inscribed in Aramaic.

We first learn about Aramaic in Judean society from 2 Kings 18 // Isaiah 36. In this scene a Judean leader urges the besieging Assyrian general to speak Aramaic, not Judean (*yĕhûdît*), in order to prevent the people from understanding. While only very few Ara-

maic words appear elsewhere in the Bible, the books of Daniel and EN contain large sections in Aramaic. In both, Aramaic pertains primarily to communication with or in the royal court. It has been common to suppose that Aramaic was also the language of the Judeans who returned from Babylonia. EN, however, does not make that claim, although Aramaisms permeate this book outside the overtly Aramaic sections (Ezra 4–6 and 7:12–26). Nehemiah insists that Judeans must speak *yĕhûdît,* not the language of their neighbors, but does not mention Aramaic (Neh 13:24).

and transmitted in Aramaic. This seemingly redundant reference to "Aramaic" has troubled translators and commentators: If the letter was written in Aramaic, what can it mean that it was also transmitted in or translated into Aramaic? The LXX omits this. Meyer (1896, 18), considering it nonsensical, emended the first "Aramaic" to "Persian" (see further Steiner 2006, 659). Most interpreters regard the second mention of "Aramaic" as a scribal notation to indicate that what follows is in Aramaic. Williamson (1985, 53) translates "the document was written in the Aramaic script but translated. (Aramaic:)"; Blenkinsopp (1988) treats the second Aramaic as an introduction. This understanding may account for why the LXX omits the second mention of Aramaic (or rather "Syrian"). Fried (2015a, 204) suggests that the second Aramaic be read as "Persian" but adds in brackets "the following is in Aramaic."

The loan word *mĕturgām*, "transmitted," a hapax legomenon, comes to mean "translated" (so NJPS and NRSV). Alter (2018, 814) prefers "read out," given that this is what a *turgeman* did in early synagogues. Rosenberg's (1991, 132) translation attempts to explicate: "The script of the epistle was written in Aramaic and explained in Aramaic," rendering the MT *mtrgm* as "explained," a meaning attested in extrabiblical Aramaic documents (Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 43).

The most helpful information, however, comes from the recently published and analyzed Amherst 63 papyrus. This document exemplifies why scribes would specify both language and script: the two were not always the same in ancient scribal circles. Amherst 63, a third-century BCE document from Egypt, possibly Elephantine, incorporates Persian-period material. It is relevant for Ezra 4–6 in two ways: first, this very long papyrus (more than 3.5 meters) combines diverse material: narratives, poetry (including fragments from biblical Psalms, such as Ps 20:2–6), and descriptions of rituals. Steiner (2006) regards Ezra 4:7–6:18 as a collation for archival purposes, similar to Amherst 63. Importantly for the present purpose, the script is demotic, but the language is Aramaic (see Nims and Steiner 1981; Holm 2017; van der Toorn 2017, 2018). This can explain why Ezra 4:7 clarifies that both language and script are in Aramaic. Steiner (2006, 559–60) suggests that the double reference to Aramaic is needed in light of the composite nature of the archival record. In his view, such explication results from the likelihood that the royal letters were not originally in Aramaic but were translated. Rendering a language in a foreign script continues beyond antiquity. See Moses Mendelssohn's eighteenth-century Pentateuch commentary where the *Torah* translation is in Hebrew letters, but its language is German.

4:8. *Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows.* This verse, in Aramaic, introduces the third (anachronistic) example of interference with rebuilding (Ezra 4:8–16). It begins a series of introductions. This verse is an abbreviated version of the subsequent heading in Ezra 4:9, possibly serving as an archival label on the obverse side of a rolled papyrus to facilitate storage and retrieval. Basic information on the outside of a rolled document is

attested in the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine and Bactria. Steiner (2006), therefore, regards this introductory verse as the notation for archival purposes, like a "filing label" for the document that follows. The Elephantine papyri likewise include such seemingly redundant introductions (e.g., *TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32; Steiner 2006, 665). Although some scholars use the repetition to discredit the reliability of Ezra 4, Williamson (2008, 49) uses it to argue for authenticity. The letter names only two individual senders; other groups will "sign off" on the adversarial letter that follows.

Rehum the commissioner. This high official possesses a Semitic name, either Aramaic (so Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 43 [Kochman]) or Babylonian-Judean (so Fried 2015a, 204). Several leading Judeans in EN have the same name, but it is not likely that he is one of them (see, e.g., Ezra 2:2; Neh 3:17, 10:26). The reference to Samaria in 4:10 and 17 supports the scholarly consensus that Rehum represents Samarian interests.

commissioner. Aramaic *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm,* lit. "master of law" or "master of the order." The LXX transliterates it as a name, but references in the Elephantine documents confirm a title for a high official in the Persian bureaucracy in charge of legal matters, upholding the law of the land. The various translations of the title as "viceroy" (Fried 2015a, 204) and "royal deputy" (NRSV) likewise capture the sense. Fried (ibid.) regards this position as the highest in the province Across-the-River apart from the satrap. Porten (1968, 54–56) translates as "chancellor," adding that such an official was authorized to issue orders in the name of the king or the satrap. An Elephantine papyrus by the satrap (411 BCE) mentions an Anani as scribe and *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm* (*TAD* A 6.2.23 // Cowley 26). Anani elsewhere in the Elephantine documents is a Judean. If this Anani is also a Judean, and the office is second only to the satrap, this would challenge Fried's claim that only Persians held very high offices in the empire. First Esdras 2:16 transliterates this throughout as a name but adds "the recorder" to 1 Esd 2:25, which parallels Ezra 4:17. Josephus titles this office as "the recorder of all that happens" here but adds a name, Beelzemos, a transliteration of the MT *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm,* in the parallel to Ezra 4:17 (*Ant.* XI.2.1 // XI.26).

Shimshai the scribe. The name is Semitic but the person is otherwise unknown. Presumably, this individual actually wrote, perhaps composed, the letter that Rehum authorized and signed. Scribes functioned like secretaries in the official bureaucracy. Their rank depended on whose scribe they were. The range varied from a very high position in the inner royal court (like a "secretary of state" today) to ordinary assistants, or teachers serving as literate and skilled transcribers of documents (see Notes at Ezra 7:6).

concerning. Aramaic *ʿal,* which in Hebrew could be adversarial as in Ezra 4:6 but neutral in Aramaic as in 4:7.

Artaxerxes. See Notes at Ezra 4:7 and 7:1.

as follows. Or "thus"; Aramaic *kĕnēmāʾ*. This scribal note appears to introduce the actual letter but is followed, instead, by another introduction.

4:9. *Then Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates.* This repetition, a second or third introduction (depending how one understands Ezra 4:7), represents the heading of the letter itself. The expanded list includes nationalities as well as official titles. Although not all the offices and nationalities can be identified, the message is clear: Rehum's letter establishes that foreigners dwell in Samaria and also claims to represent the concern of others throughout the empire, including Babylon and Elam. Steiner (2006, 665) points to Elephantine papyri with similar

seemingly redundant introductions (e.g., *TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32). Fried (2015a, 206) regards this verse and the next as a gloss. First Esdras compresses this verse.

Then. Aramaic *ʾĕdayin.* The term seems out of place. One expects a verb, but the long sentence that begins here, extending to v. 10, does not include one. The LXX solves the problem with "Thus judged Rehum," possibly on the basis of *dînāyēʾ* (translated below as "judges"). Williamson (1985, 54) regards it as misplaced from v. 8. Several interpreters omit "then." Steiner (2006, 669–75) concludes that the term functions as the Hebrew *ʿaz,* that is, a scribal substitute for extraneous information in salutations. He notes similar phenomena in Assyrian and Babylonian records. In any case, this editorial gloss serves as a transition to the fuller letter heading. Like v. 8, the language implies a copy of official records.

the commissioner. The LXX transliterates *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm* here as a name, Baaltam, not a title as in Ezra 4:8.

the judges, the envoys, the counselors, the Persians, the Erechites, the Babylonians, the Susaites, that is Elamites. The list of senders expands to include unnamed officials and various nationalities who inhabit the province of Across-the-River, including Samaria. In some cases it is difficult to determine which terms refer to peoples and which to offices; nor is it clear which of these groups inhabit Samaria. But the overall message is unmistakable: alarm (on the king's behalf) by a wide coalition, because of what the returning Judeans are doing.

the judges, the envoys, the counselors. Each of these terms has been translated in a variety of ways, mostly as ethnonyms. The KJV has "Dinaites, Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites." While *dînāyēʾ* is a common term for "judges" (see, e.g., *TAD* B 2.3.24, dated 456 BCE, the reign of Artaxerxes), the LXX regards it as a verb, "to judge"; Steiner (2006, 677–78) notes a group named Dinaites mentioned in Assyrian sources. Fried (2015a, 206) regards *ʾăparsatkāyēʾ* as a compound Old Persian term and translates as "investigators." She tentatively considers *ṭarpĕlāyēʾ* as "Persian officials."

the Persians, the Erechites, the Babylonians, the Susaites, that is Elamites. Possibly deportees settled in Samaria; alternatively, international opposition.

Erechites. Erech was a major city in southern Babylonia.

Susaites, that is Elamites. Susa, the chief city in Elam, was an important part of the Persian Empire. It served as a summer capital for the Achaemenid court. Nehemiah claims to have been the king's cupbearer at Susa (Neh 1:1, 11). The book of Esther is situated in Susa, featured as the chief city of the empire. There is no record of deportation from Susa to the Levant, although the city had been conquered and pillaged by Ashurbanipal in 647 BCE.

4:10. *and the rest of the nations that the great and noble Osnappar exiled and settled them in the city of Samaria.* Second Kings 17 describes King Shalmaneser's conquest of Samaria in 722 BCE and the deportation of its population (2 Kgs 17:23). It claims that the Assyrian king brought groups "from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel" (2 Kgs 17:24). Ezra 4:2 refers to a repopulation by the Assyrian Esarhaddon (reigned 680–669 BCE). The claim in 2 Kings 17 of a complete deportation of Israelites from Samaria does not match the archaeological records; it conflicts as well with 2 Chronicles, which recognizes the ongoing presence of Israelites in Samaria. Isaiah 7:8 alludes to a depor-

tation close enough to Esarhaddon's time or his successor Ashurbanipal's. First Esdras 2:16–17 omits this statement.

Osnappar. Or Asnappar. The name in this form does not appear elsewhere. This king is usually identified as the famous King Ashurbanipal of Assyria (reigned 669–631 BCE). It is not clear why the senders would praise an Assyrian when writing to a Persian king. No record mentions a displacement of population by Ashurbanipal. He captured Memphis, Egypt, in 667 BCE and led a second expedition to quell a rebellion in 663 BCE. He dealt with civil war in Babylon in 652 BCE and subsequent battles with Elam (Grayson 1992, 746–47). Assyria intervened in the southern Levant in the mid- to late 640s BCE, and Ashurbanipal conquered Tyre and Acco, which had rebelled. Assyrian sources corroborate the practice of deportations and repopulation, but not by Osnappar. According to Vanderhooft (2003, 222), "Assyrian deportations from the southern Levant apparently ceased" after 640 BCE.

the city of Samaria. This chief city of the kingdom of Israel was built by the Israelite King Omri (ninth century BCE). The Assyrians besieged and conquered it in ca. 722 BCE, and the name came to designate also the province that replaced the kingdom. An inscription of Sargon II (*ANET* 284) claims that he deported more than twenty-seven thousand people to Assyria and repopulated Samaria with other conquered peoples. Second Kings 17 reports that Samaria was resettled by foreigners, but by the beginning of the Persian period the city of Samaria became "the largest and most important city of Palestine" (Zertal 2003, 380). The province also grew. Some 136 of the settlements in Samaria in the Persian period (about 58 percent) are not continuous with earlier archaeological strata. Newcomers settled especially around the city, with nearly half of all Persian-period sites clustered within a 10-kilometer circle around Samaria (Zertal 1990, 14). The Wadi Daliyeh papyri (ca. 331 BCE) reflect ethnic diversity in Samaria, but with Israelite and Judean names in the majority (Hensel 2018). EN presents it as a competitor to Judah and Jerusalem (see Neh 2:10, where Sanballat, known outside of EN as the governor of Samaria, features as Nehemiah's chief opponent). Historical records show that Samaria was more developed than Jerusalem and Judah during the Persian period. The two provinces shared similar language and material culture. They also cooperated in support of the Judeans in Elephantine (see the joint memo from Judah's and Samaria's governors in *TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32). Knoppers's 2013 study of Judeans and Samaritans concludes that conflict between the two provinces during the Persian period cannot be documented outside of EN.

and the rest of the Across-the-River. Aramaic *ʿăbar nahărâ* is the Aramaic name for the province/satrapy west of the Euphrates River and Babylon, bordered by the Mediterranean and Egypt. The satrapy appears as Ebir Nari in Akkadian in the annals from Esarhaddon's reign (Rainey 1969, 51). The satrapy or province (*paḥăwa* in Aramaic) included Syria (Aram), Samaria, Judah, Phoenicia (including the coastal plains), and sometimes Cyprus, with Judah and Samaria near the western rim of the satrapy. Herodotus identifies it as the fifth satrapy (*Hist.* III.91.1); his "Syro-Palestine" includes Judah and Samaria without naming them (VIII.89). Until the beginning of the Ahasuerus/Xerxes reign, the province also included Babylonia. Persian and Elamite texts refer to the province as "Assyria," not Ebir Nari. Multilingual sources (such as Darius's building inscription) confirm the reference to the same province (Rainey 1969, 54–55).

Satrapies were assessed regular tributes that satraps and/or provincial governors were to collect and forward to the royal treasury. On satraps and satrapies, including taxation, see Briant 2002, esp. 62–79 and 810–13; Elayi and Sapin 1991; and "The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE)" in the Introduction.

And now. This common term often introduces a letter after a salutation. The LXX omits it. Steiner (2006, 680) regards such repeated introductions as signs that Ezra 4:8–6:18 is a copy of several archival documents placed together as a report of an archival search.

4:11. *This is a copy of the letter that they sent to him.* After several introductions, the author reduces the heading to bare-bones essentials. Williamson (1985, 53) places this section of the verse in parentheses. First Esdras omits it. Steiner (2006, 652–55, 665–69, 672–73) regards it as part of an archival heading since it conforms to archival practices in the Elephantine papyri.

copy. Aramaic *paršegen.* This Persian loan word signals that the copy does not include a full text (Zer Kavod 1948; 1988, 30 n. 13). The material is abridged (Steiner 2006, 680–81).

To Artaxerxes the king: your servants, the men of Across-the-River. And now. The brevity of this address has contributed to doubts about the text's authenticity as a Persian-period document (Grabbe 2006); however, Steiner (2006, 680–81) explains the brevity as the work of the archivist. Jedaniah's letter from Elephantine exemplifies a copy in which extensive salutations are omitted (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30).

your servants. The Q has plural; the K has singular, "your servant."

men. Lit. "man" in the singular, but functioning as a collective noun.

4:12. *Be it made known to the king that the Judeans who had gone from you came to us, to Jerusalem.* The letter begins as a seemingly neutral report by loyal subjects about local activities within the empire. Its writers identify the builders (whom they challenge) as Judeans now coming back to Judah. There is no need to surmise that they came from the royal court and therefore connect them with Nehemiah and his entourage, as does Fried (2015a, 213).

Be it made known to the king. The verb "to know" recurs in every single verse.

Judeans. Aramaic *yĕhûdāyēʾ*. Ezra 4–6 consistently uses this term for returnees. The exceptions in 6:14–18, where "Israel" and "*gôlâ*" appear, reflect editorial framing. The term refers to members originally from Judah, either the tribe, the kingdom, or the province.

They are building the rebellious and wicked city. Maligning the Judeans and Jerusalem is the heart of this letter's intent. Unauthorized building of city walls under imperial rule signals preparation for rebellion. Yet the present report is at odds with Ezra 1–6, where the temple, not the city, is being built. It resembles, instead, charges leveled in Nehemiah (Neh 6:5–7).

and they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. The meaning of some terms is uncertain, making it difficult to grasp what work is being done. First Esdras and Josephus include the temple and thereby minimize the problems.

they are finishing the walls. Aramaic *šûrayyā ʾšakhlilû* in the K; *šûrayyāʾ šakhlilû* in the Q. It is not altogether clear what stage of reconstruction is in view here. Restoring Jerusalem's wall takes center stage in Nehemiah's mission, ca. 444 BCE (Neh 1–7),

with King Artaxerxes' permission, presumably the same king as in Ezra 4. By then, the temple had been built. There is no hint in Nehemiah's account of an earlier attempt and a royal prohibition regarding the walls. Some scholars (see, e.g., VanderKam 1992b) rely on this type of inconsistency to argue for reading EN as two separate books, but such a conclusion is unnecessary.

finishing. The Aramaic "to finish" can mean "to complete" or "to bring to an end," but also refurbishing, as well as putting on the finishing touches or creating a finish, like "finish" in English, that is, to polish.

repairing the foundations. Williamson (1985, 53) translates "have (already) laid the foundations," thereby resolving the peculiar sequence in the MT where a statement about the completion of the walls precedes comments on the foundations. But Williamson's elegant translation is clearer than the MT. The meaning of *yaḥîṭû,* translated here as "repairing," is uncertain. Fried (2015a, 211) translates it as "searching out its foundations," which she relates to Babylonian building inscriptions. Either way, it is odd that the walls would be near completion while foundations are still in disrepair. First Esdras 2:18 has "repairing its market places and walls and laying the foundations for a temple." Josephus leaves the foundations out and mentions "raising up the temple" (*Ant.* XI.21–23).

4:13. *And now, be it made known to the king.* See also Ezra 4:12. The writers ingratiate themselves as helpful informers, protecting the king's interests.

if this city will be built and if the walls will be finished, they will not pay toll-tax, tribute, and levy, and royal revenue will be harmed. Again, the emphasis on city and walls, not temple, suggests a dislocation of the letter. First Esdras 2:20 modifies MT Ezra 4:13: "Since the building of the temple is now going on, we think it best not to neglect such a matter."

toll-tax, tribute, and levy. The three different types of taxes are construed also as "tribute, poll-tax or land-tax" (NJPS), "tribute, custom or toll" (NRSV), "toll, tribute or custom" (KJV), and "rent, tribute and corvée" (Fried 2015a, 210). The LXX combines these as *phoroi.* In Ezra 7:24, Artaxerxes exempts cult personnel from paying this trio of taxes. The terms may represent in a general way an entire gamut of taxes. The Persian comprehensive taxation system, based largely on the earlier Babylonian system, is well documented. According to Herodotus, each satrapy paid the royal court a fixed amount (*Hist.* III.89–92). But other taxes are in view in Persian-period sources and show a remarkable uniformity across the empire, from Egypt to Bactria (see Folmer 2017; Henkelman 2017; on taxes, see Heltzer 2008, 161–72 and 191–96; Briant 2002, 384–87 and 390–406; Jursa 2009).

toll-tax. Aramaic *mindâ,* elsewhere *mindat,* refers to custom fees for the use of royal property, waterways, or roads. Briant (2002, 385) defines *mndtʾ* as "an Akkadian word referring to various fiscal levies, including taxes in Achaemenid Egypt." An account from Elephantine, dated 475 BCE, records custom fees collected from boats entering and leaving Egypt through the Nile. The long list begins with "the duty (*mndta*) which was collected from it" (*TAD* C 3.7, column 2.1). Nehemiah 5:4 mentions the "*middâ* of the king," likely a Hebrew version of the Aramaic "*mindâ* of the king" in the documents (see Bactria, letter A 8, in Naveh and Shaked 2012). In the Murashu records, it refers to the use of canals (Fried 2015a, 214) and land. See also Neh 5:4.

tribute. Aramaic *bĕlô.* A term that in an Akkadian form, *biltu,* refers to tax that foreigners pay a king (Fried 2015a, 215).

levy. Aramaic *hălāk.* The term is known from a number of Persian-period documents, at times as *ilku* in Babylonian sources and as *hlk* from Elephantine. Jursa (2009, 255) describes *ilku* "the most general term" for "service or tax obligation" and as "corvé labour/corvé-tax." Generally, *ilku* refers to required military or other service (Fried 2015a, 215). It also relates to land grants such as the *hatru* in Mesopotamia, where land for service (either military or as provisions) was granted by the royal court. Egypt's satrap likewise collected such levy from local estates he had granted to subordinates. His letter to one administrator, for example (*TAD* A 6.11), instructs the official to transfer rights to an estate from a deceased father to the son as heir, with the provision that the levy (*hlk*) will now be collected from the son (see esp. lines 5–6). A satrap in a letter from Bactria, dated 353 BCE, intervenes to protect his camel drivers from having to pay in a particular situation the *hlka,* which Naveh and Shaked render as "land tax" (see Naveh and Shaked 2012, 277).

Xenophon in the fifth century BCE, although writing about Sparta, sheds some light on such practices, since they most likely were common throughout the ancient world. He reports that in preparing his campaign against the Persian satrap of Asia Minor, the Spartan Agesilaus "sent instructions to all cities on route to Caria that they should make a market available" (Xenophon, *Hell.* 3.4.11); furthermore, "whoever produces a horse, arms and a good man would be exempted from military service himself" (3.4.15).

English "levy" expresses this type of a tax. This English term has been used since the Middle Ages when it referred to imposed military, corvée-type service, but it was expanded to other forms of special taxes.

and royal revenue will be harmed. Under normal circumstances, urban development in the Persian Empire, as in the modern world, could be expected to increase revenue by increasing a concentration of wealth and providing more efficient organization for taxation purposes. The letter, however, presents rebuilding as prelude to rebellion.

harmed. This term (from *n.z.q.*) is confined to late texts (Esth 7:4 in Hebrew; Dan 6:3, Ezra 4:13, 15 in Aramaic).

4:14. *Now, because we salt with the salt of the palace.* The LXX omits this part of the verse, and 1 Esdras omits and replaces it with "since the building of the temple is now going on" (1 Esd 2:20). Salt could refer to an alliance ceremony (Zer Kavod 1988, 32). But more likely the writers certify themselves as loyal subjects in a more general sense, as grateful beneficiaries.

salt. Salt was a common component of rations in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (Hallock 1969; Fried 2015a, 216). In the ancient world, before refrigeration, salt was vital for food preservation and healing. Ezekiel 16:4 shows that it was used for a newborn at birth, probably to prevent infection after the severing of the umbilical cord. In Tobit 6:6 it is used for food preservation. Control over salt was a major source of economic and political power, and continued to be so into modern times. The central government in China dissolved as late as 2014 the monopoly on salt that had begun in the seventh century CE. Journalist Lucy Hornby (*Financial Times,* November 21, 2014) points out that salt revenues had helped undergird a strong economy in that country.

Gandhi's march to the sea in 1930, known as the Salt March, defied the British salt monopoly and is considered pivotal to his successful toppling of the imperial control of India.

palace. Aramaic *hêkhĕlāʾ* most often refers to a temple but context here suggests "palace," as is common in Daniel (see, e.g., Dan 4:1, 26)

and it is not proper for us to see the nakedness of the king, we therefore send and make it known to the king. This statement is rather bold, given that *ʿerwâ,* "nakedness," in the Bible primarily refers to forbidden sexual exposure (see Lev 18 and 20, e.g., Lev 20:11 where exposing the nakedness of a family member is tantamount to sexual intercourse). The LXX has "shameless acts." In Gen 42:9 and 12, however, seeing the nakedness of the land conveys political treachery, of which Joseph accuses his brothers. Here, the informers express eagerness to protect the king from grave dishonor inflicted on him by the Judeans' actions. The NJPS has "it is not fitting for us to witness the king's dishonor," and the NRSV has "it is not proper for us to see the shame of the king." First Esdras 2:20–21 is less dramatic: "we think it best not to neglect such a matter, but to speak to our lord the king, in order that, if it seems good to you, search may be made."

we send and make it known. Lit. "we sent and made it known." Such stylistic use of tenses is common in letters (Williamson 1985, 56 n. 14c).

4:15. *so that one should investigate the book of memoranda of your ancestors.* Also possible: "book of remembrances." The reference is to archival sources, "records" (NJPS) or "annals" (NRSV). Searching archival records is a recurrent motif in EN and one of several tropes used to emphasize the importance of documents (Wright 2008; Eskenazi 1988a). This theme will connect and contrast the successful opposition to the building in Ezra 4 with the successful reversal of such opposition in Ezra 5–6. Although the Persian Empire had its own archives, the present reference points to Assyrian and Babylonian records against Israel and Judah (on Persian archives, see, e.g., Briant 2002, 6–7; and Stolper and André-Salvini 1992).

investigate. This could refer to the king as subject (NJPS, "you may search") or be rendered as a passive form ("a search will be made") like Ezra 5:17. This verb, from *b.q.r.,* later describes Ezra's mission in Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:14).

book of memoranda of your ancestors. Records or archives kept by royal administrations. The Babylonian Chronicles, for example, preserve extensive records of royal conquests by the Assyrians and Babylonians (from the eighth century forward). Several portions of the Babylonian Chronicles depict campaigns in the west, including those against Samaria and Judah. The section known as the Nabonidus Chronicle describes Cyrus's conquest of Babylon. While royal archives are to be expected, referring to "your ancestors" here is imprecise. The reference is to archives now owned by the Persian court, not produced by Persian kings. In Mal 3:16, God's "book of remembrance" registers the deeds of the righteous.

and you will find in the book of memoranda and you will know. The LXX omits this second reference to that book.

that this city is a rebellious city and harmful to kings and provinces, and sedition had been at work in its midst from days of old. This allegation is not entirely false. Although Judah features rarely in the extensive Assyrian and Babylonian records, the issue when it

does is royal response to rebellions, probably the withholding of tribute. Sennacherib's prism describes this Assyrian king's campaign against Judah at the time of King Hezekiah (701 BCE): "As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he didn't submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities. . . . Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage." Hezekiah agreed to pay thirty gold talents and eight hundred silver talents, plus precious stones (*ANET* 287–88; see the similar biblical account of the event in 2 Kgs 18).

Esarhaddon's Prism B records that this Assyrian king commanded King Manasseh of Judah, and twenty-one other kings in the Levant, to transport building material to Nineveh in 677/676 BCE (*ANET* 291; 2 Chr 33:11; see also *ANET* 301 for another tribute from Judah to Assyria). The Babylonian Chronicles describe the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE (*ANET* 563–64). Unfortunately, the text is broken, and information about the second, destructive campaign in 587/586 BCE is missing. Such records corroborate the charge that Judah repeatedly reneged on its vassal obligations to its Mesopotamian rulers. The parallel in 1 Esd 2:23 states, instead, that "the Jews were rebels and kept setting up blockades in it from of old. That is why this city was laid waste."

at work. Aramaic *ʿābhĕdîn.* The LXX has "slaves," that is, "there are slaves" in the city's midst, a possible translation of the MT.

from days of old. Urging the king to review the history in royal archives, the opponents (ironically?) affirm the antiquity of the Judean claim to the city.

on that account this city had been destroyed. This allegation is true. Jerusalem, in both biblical and Babylonian records, refrained from paying the expected tribute to Babylon and was destroyed in 587/586 BCE as a result (2 Kgs 25; Jer 38–39, 52). The Bible offers a theological framework, with rebellion against God's teachings as the underlying, decisive cause. So too does Ezra 5:12. Yet EN does not linger on Jerusalem's fall, either here or elsewhere, but refers to it in general terms.

destroyed. The root of the verb, *ḥ.r.b.,* also forms the word "sword," carrying the sense of being laid waste by the sword.

4:16. *We make it known to the king that if that city will be built and its walls finished, then you will have no portion in Across-the-River.* The LXX merely states, "you will have no peace." First Esdras 2:24 elaborates on the potential danger to the king: "If this city is built and its walls finished, you will no longer have access to Coelesyria and Phoenicia." The letter's allegations are preposterous: they claim that the small province of Judah, and the few who are building Jerusalem, pose a major threat to the empire. Hyperbole is common when squabbling groups seek to persuade the centers of power. Yet, although this exaggerated claim presumes to warn the king, it serves well as internal Judean propaganda, magnifying Judah's strategic importance. The charges touch on actual historical developments in the western rim of the Persian Empire in which Artaxerxes confronted persistent Greek expansion and rebellion in Egypt.

no portion in Across-the-River. The term "portion," Aramaic *ḥălāq,* like the Hebrew *ḥēleq* in Neh 2:20, carries the sense of legal ownership. Impending insurrection in the one city of Jerusalem, the writers emphasize, has consequences beyond mere local disputes: it threatens the king's control of the West with the loss of a foothold in the strategically and financially important province Across-the-River.

3. RESULTS: ARTAXERXES' RESPONSE STOPS THE WORK (4:17–24)

4 [17]The message that the king sent to Rehum the commissioner and Shimshai the scribe and the rest of their associates who were settled in Samaria and in the rest of Across-the-River: "Peace. And now, [18]the document that you sent to us has been read distinctly before me. [19]And an order has been issued by me and they investigated and found that this city, from days of old, has been rising against kings and rebellion and sedition are at work in it. [20]And there were powerful kings over Jerusalem, and they ruled over all of Across-the-River, and toll-tax, tribute, and levy were given to them. [21]Now, issue an order to stop those men; and that city should not be built until there be issued an order from me. [22]And be careful not to be negligent about this. Why should the damage increase to harm kings?"

[23]Then as soon as a copy of the document of Artaxerxes the king was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to Jerusalem to the Judeans and stopped them with armed soldiers. [24]Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped and was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Introduction and Structure

The king's terse response confirms the veracity of the allegations (Ezra 4:17–20). It authorizes Rehum and his associates to issue a temporary restraining order to stop the work on the walls (4:21–22), which they hasten to carry out (4:23). The structure of Ezra 4:17–24 is as follows:

1. The king's response (4:17–22)
2. The results: The opponents stop the work (4:23)
3. Conclusion: The building of the temple stops until King Darius's second year (520 BCE) (4:24)

Notes

4:17. *Rehum the commissioner.* The LXX renders *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm,* "commissioner," here as *Baaltam;* 1 Esdras has *graphonti,* "recorder," but also "Beltethmuth" (see NOTES at Ezra 4:9).

and the rest of their associates who were settled in Samaria. The mention of Samaria reiterates that Samaria is the center of the opposition. The others mentioned in Ezra 4:9–10 are implicitly included as the "associates."

Samaria. Samaria (Aramaic *šāmĕrāyin;* Heb. *šōmĕrôn*) can refer to the city or to the province (see "the city of Samaria" in NOTES at Ezra 4:10).

Across-the-River. First Esdras 2:25 has instead "Syria and Phoenicia."

Peace. Aramaic *šĕlām;* compare *bišlam* in Ezra 4:7, which encourages reading a greeting also in Ezra 4:7. First Esdras omits it.

4:18. *the document . . . has been read distinctly before me.* The LXX has instead "the tribute-gatherer was called before me," and 1 Esd 2:26 has "I have read the letter." The scene corresponds to royal procedures in which functionaries read reports to the king. It does not establish the literary or linguistic facility of the king.

distinctly. Aramaic *mĕphāraš.* The LXX and 1 Esdras do not include this word. The term can mean "to explain" or "to divide." It comes to mean something like "spelled out," usually in the sense of spelling out the intention of a term or idea. It is often rendered as "translated" or "in translation" (NJPS, NRSV, Fried 2015a, 211). Williamson's (1985, 57 n. 18a) preference for "verbatim" is well argued, suggesting the sense of "piece by piece" or "word by word." In *TAD* A 6.1.3 it is used to differentiate item from item. It indicates that the matter was fully explicated with all its ramifications. Slotki's (1951, 136) "hath been plainly read before me" makes good sense. Zer Kavod (1948; 1988, 33) emphasizes "fully," that is, with all its details, not only its essential points. So too the Peshitta and Vulgate to Neh 8:8. In Num 15:34 the verb in the *pual* means "to explain," a meaning that fits the *qal* of Lev 24:12 and best suits the current context, as well as Neh 8:8. The English "distinctly" attempts to unify both meanings. J. A. Cook (2019, 51) prefers "translated," finding the meaning most fitting as well in *TAD* D 7.24.15. In subsequent Jewish tradition, forms of the verb come to designate rabbinic biblical exegesis (*parshanut*), such as Rashi's exegesis or commentary (*pĕrûš*). It also underlies the Hebrew for "Pharisees" (*pĕrûšîm*).

4:19. *they investigated and found.* The king's actions correspond to the informants' request in Ezra 4:16. Seeking and finding is a leitmotif in EN (Wright 2008). The discovery vouches for the reliability of written sources. The location of the archives is not mentioned. Available Persian records are fragmentary and refer mostly to administrative distribution of rations (e.g., the Persepolis fragments). Mesopotamian sources, however, are extensive.

this city, from days of old, has been rising against kings. The discovery matches and thereby confirms the allegations against Judah in Ezra 4:15. The Bible records various attempts by Jerusalem to resist Mesopotamian control. The most famous take place in 701 BCE, 597 BCE, and 587/586 BCE (see Notes at Ezra 4:15).

4:20. *And there were powerful kings over Jerusalem, and they ruled over all of Across-the-River, and toll-tax, tribute, and levy were given to them.* Of Judah's kings, only David and Solomon would qualify. First Kings 5:1–4 claims that Solomon ruled "over all the kingdoms of Across-the-River" (1 Kgs 5:4 [NRSV 4:24]). However, Jerusalem's extensive power is not attested in extrabiblical sources. Galling (1954, 198) sees a reference to past Assyrian and Babylonian kings who ruled over Jerusalem. So too Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 46–48). Williamson (1985, 64) considers this a reference to Artaxerxes' ancestors. First Esdras adds "cruel" to "powerful."

toll-tax, tribute, and levy. The adversarial letters introduced these taxes as a potential loss to the king. Taxes or tribute are the letter's main royal concern, as one would expect, given Achaemenid rule and empires in general. There are no ideological or religious concerns, worries about loss of territory, or Persian military interests. Tribute is the king's primary consideration (see further at Ezra 4:13).

were given to them. If Judean kings are meant, it is difficult to construe what ancient source might claim this. The ascription of such great power to Judah suggests a Judean hand. But "them" may mean foreign rulers, as 1 Esd 2:27 implies.

4:21. *issue an order.* Rehum's title as *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm,* literally "master of decree" (translated as "commissioner" at 4:8), indicates his capacity to issue edicts on the king's behalf. His prerogatives in this role are nonetheless limited. He can act only after receiving a written authorization from the king. This type of delegation of authority in Persian

administration is evident in *TAD* A 6.5 // Driver 1. This Elephantine papyrus is especially instructive, even though very fragmentary: Arsames the governor appoints a lower official to issue an order on the governor's behalf but also retains the governor's right of intervention, inviting the involved parties to come to the governor. Given that Rehum is not a Persian name but a Semitic one, the letter implies that highly positioned non-Persian officials had the power to issue orders on the king's behalf. First Esdras 2:28 has "I have now issued orders." (See also "commissioner" in NOTES at 4:8.)

to stop those men; and that city should not be built until there be issued an order from me. The fateful royal decision includes two distinct injunctions: first, that the builders be stopped; and second, that the city not be built until the king decides otherwise. As noted, objection to rebuilding the city, rather than the temple, is consistent with the adversaries' letter (Ezra 4:8–16) but inconsistent with Ezra 3:1–4:5 and 4:24, which pertain to building the temple (only 1 Esdras mentions the temple in the king's response). Ezra 5:1 resumes with a report about temple building. This and other inconsistencies in Ezra 4 conflate the building of the temple with that of the city and its walls. Together with the anachronistic references to kings who follow Darius, the letter indicates that Ezra 4:7–23 reflects events later than those in Ezra 3 and 5 (and belongs, probably, with Neh 1–7).

stop. The term *b.ṭ.l.* in the Bible is confined to the Aramaic in Ezra 4–6, with one Hebrew example in Eccl 12:3. It signals a temporary cessation. The semantic range of the word in early rabbinic sources includes "to be idle," "to annul," "to cancel," "to suspend," and "to neglect" (see, e.g., m. Pirkei Avot 4.10, where it suggests neglect rather than a permanent end). Suspending, rather than annulling, the project best fits the meaning in Ezra 4–6.

those men. Aramaic *gubhrayyāʾ*. This noun, here and in Ezra 5:4 and 10, differs from *ʾănāšîm,* another term for "men." It refers to workers actually engaged in building, most likely implying the labor force. Related to *gibbôr* in Hebrew, a warrior, it suggests able-bodied males, presumably in their physical prime, which is why a show of force is anticipated. The subsequent letter to Darius differentiates such men, that is, *gubhrayyāʾ* who are actually building (Ezra 5:4), from the elders who represent the community and interact with the Persian officials (5:9).

until there be issued an order from me. The provisional clause in Artaxerxes' resolution is missing in the LXX and 1 Esdras. In EN it helps account for how (presumably the same) King Artaxerxes could later permit Nehemiah to rebuild the wall(s) (Neh 2–5) without violating the legendary Persian law that (ostensibly) cannot be changed (see, e.g., Esth 8:8). Blenkinsopp (1988, 115) suggests a possible editorial hand. Williamson (1985, 64) refers to Driver's Aramaic Documents 1 and 8 (*TAD* A 6.5, 6.11), which show a relevant flexibility in Achaemenid administration of law. One need not, therefore, rule out the possibility that this provision represents credible Persian policy.

4:22. *And be careful. . . . Why should the damage increase to harm kings?* The letter's conclusion echoes the warning in the adversaries' letter to the king (Ezra 4:16) but contains a warning of its own. Concluding warnings typify Achaemenid-period letters such as Arsames' letters from Elephantine (*TAD* A 6.8, 6.10). First Esdras 2:29 adds "and that such wicked proceedings go no further to the annoyance of kings."

4:23. *as soon as a copy of the document of Artaxerxes the king was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe and their associates, they went in haste to Jerusalem.* The LXX, which translates "document" as "tribute-gatherer," has "after the tribute-gatherer read before . . ." (see "the document . . ." in Notes at Ezra 4:18). The king's letter seems to have sufficed as license to halt Jerusalem's reconstruction. There is no mention of a separate decree by Rehum.

was read before. The phrase implies a formal presentation before assembled officials (those of Ezra 4:9–10). It leads to immediate action by all the parties involved.

Rehum and Shimshai the scribe. See Notes at Ezra 4:8. The omission of Rehum's title is odd. Some LXX manuscripts add a version of it.

stopped them with armed soldiers. The passage depicts imperially sanctioned military intervention by the leaders of one province in the sphere of another. This kind of action is consistent with Persian policy, which used local forces on behalf of the empire rather than Persian troops. There is no hint of physical damage. First Esdras adds "horses and force."

4:24. *Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped and was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.* The concluding sentence in Aramaic virtually repeats the Hebrew statement in Ezra 4:5, functioning as a resumptive repetition. It implies that the intervening section is an insertion.

the work on the house of God which is in Jerusalem. This is the first time since Ezra 4:3 that the expression "the house of God" appears. The intervening correspondence in the MT and LXX refers only to the city, the walls, and the foundation.

until the second year of the reign of Darius. The year is 520 BCE, when Haggai and Zechariah place the beginning of the work on the temple. Darius seized the Persian throne in 522 BCE, an act that led to turmoil throughout the empire and to rebellion in Babylon. The Murashu banking archives reflect economic instability in Babylonia as a result. By 520 BCE Darius had successfully quelled rebellions and began reorganizing the military and administrative structures of the empire (see "The Persian Empire [539–332 BCE]" in the Introduction).

Comments (4:6–24)

Ezra 4:6–24 is a baffling account. It describes the obstacle to building the temple, claiming that outside adversaries, led by Samaria, disrupted the work. The evidence to prove the case, however, seems to refer to events decades later. Moreover, this description conflicts with the more likely account in Haggai 1, where the people's apathy caused a delay (see Notes at Ezra 5:1).

EN describes types of harassment and interference by reference to three distinct letters to Persian kings. All the examples postdate the time of King Darius. The documents shift in Ezra 4:8 into Aramaic and suggest an archival source from which these documents are culled somewhat incompletely.

The first specific reference (Ezra 4:6) pertains to King Ahasuerus (486–466/465 BCE) without reproducing the letter's content. The second example is a letter to Artaxerxes by several non-Judeans, but also without content (4:7). One cannot determine whether or not it is adversarial. The third (4:8–16) is a letter from other named officials, centered in Samaria, laden with elaborate introduction(s) (4:8–11), accusing the

Judeans in Jerusalem of sedition for building the city and its walls (4:12–16). It does not mention the temple.

Artaxerxes' response suspends further work (Ezra 4:17–22). Consequently, the opponents force the builders in Jerusalem to stop (4:23). Work stops until the second year of King Darius, namely, 520 BCE (4:24). Ezra 4:8–6:18 is in Aramaic.

The chronology is out of order since the letters are to and from kings who follow King Darius, yet they are placed here as if explaining why the work stopped until Darius's reign. Since Ezra 6:14 lists the kings in the correct order, it shows that EN's final authors/editors were familiar with the correct historical sequence: Darius, Ahasuerus, and Artaxerxes. Furthermore, the letters are thematically out of context as well. Ezra 4:8–23 objects to building Jerusalem and its wall, not the temple. For this reason, most scholars reasonably conclude that Ezra 4 belonged originally with the Nehemiah material (see, e.g., Wright 2005, 30–45; Fried 2015a, 40–50).

Literarily speaking, Ezra 4:7–23 is an insertion; the narrative resumes with clarity at Ezra 5:1. Since the material clearly belongs to a later period, it appears that the editors deliberately disregarded chronology. The most widely held explanation is that lacking contemporaneous material to document harassment, EN relies on later evidence and inserts it here (e.g., Williamson 2008, 49–50). Steiner (2006) has a different explanation; he considers this section archival material and explains the (dis)order on that basis.

The Aramaic correspondence in Ezra 4:6–24, and the introduction(s) to it in 4:6–7, still constitute a problem without a completely satisfactory solution, but several possible explanations have been proposed. Major issues in the section (addressed in what follows) include (1) identifying the scope of the units, (2) determining their origins and authenticity, and (3) discerning the probable history of the documents and the relevant periods and assessing the purpose of the composition as it stands.

SCOPE OF THE UNITS

Ezra 4:6–23 poses the main problem in the narrative flow of Ezra 1–6. Without it, the story or history unfolds smoothly: harassment by people of the land stops the work till Darius's second year (Ezra 4:5), and then work resumes in 520 BCE (5:1). As things stand, Ezra 4:24 appears to be a resumptive repetition of 4:5 (albeit in Aramaic instead of Hebrew). It is therefore reasonable to consider 4:6–23 or 4:8–23 an insertion independent of Ezra 3 and 5–6.

Most scholars conclude that Ezra 4 exemplifies tactics that foreign adversaries used to halt work on the temple. It was inserted here out of chronological order to document typical forms of harassment, given that contemporary evidence was lacking, and in order to claim that opposition took place at the very beginning of the restoration. That the following chapters (Ezra 5–6) are also in Aramaic implies that the Aramaic section is a composite of independent sources.

Steiner (2006) offers a somewhat different explanation for the seeming chronological disarrangement. He claims that the entire Aramaic section (Ezra 4:8–6:18) is a unified report, composed in its entirety from archival material for Artaxerxes' benefit (4:7). Some aspects of this theory go back to Meyer (1896, 63–71) and others to Schaeder (1930, 29–57) (so Steiner, ibid., 646). But they developed their theories with ideas that proved untenable once new archaeological and archival materials became

available (Steiner, ibid., 658–59). Steiner revives that basic archival premise but sets it at a different *Sitz im Leben.*

According to Steiner, Ezra 4:6–6:18 presents a realistic archival record composed for archival use. It reflects well-documented scribal conventions used to copy and integrate different documents for record keeping. Thus, the entire Aramaic section, extending to Ezra 6:18 (not only Ezra 4), is an archival unit. Its form and content reflect copied, rather than newly composed, material. The reference to Bishlam, etc., in Ezra 4:7 introduces all of the Aramaic section, ending in 6:18. It does not refer to a separate letter. As a unified archival report, Ezra 4–6 integrates other records, copied from different sources, depicting certain events regarding Jerusalem.

Steiner's (2006) analysis also claims to account for the seeming repetition of introductions in Ezra 4:8–11, as well as for the reversed chronology in Ezra 4–6 (with Artaxerxes appearing before Darius). To support his claims about the conventional nature of the multiple introductions in 4:7–11, Steiner offers biblical examples of multiple introductions (e.g., Gen 32:5; ibid., 666). More importantly, he refers to Achaemenid-period documents that illustrate such a practice when correspondence is preserved as copies (ibid., 665–75). In archival records, the exigencies of archival record keeping by officials result in multiple introductions (ibid., 665–69) and explain, as well, the omission of certain details in salutations (ibid., 669–75).

The Elephantine papyri exemplify some relevant practices. *TAD* A 4.7 and 4.8 (// Cowley 30 and 31), copies of the letter(s) sent to Judah, share some of the features found in Ezra 4–6 (Steiner 2006, 665). *TAD* A 4.9 (// Cowley 32) includes redundant information (see also *TAD* A 4.10 // Cowley 33), thus illustrating ways in which copies are abridged (ibid., 680). The redundancy and seeming incoherence in Ezra 4, then, result from literary embedding that is evident in other Achaemenid archival records.

Steiner (2006, 661–65) also gives examples of archival documents that illustrate the practice of presenting information in a reversed order, with reports about later developments preceding those for earlier ones, as in Ezra 4–6.

New studies further highlight the scribal practice of combining diverse material into a single document. These indirectly support important aspects of Steiner's interpretation. The Amherst 63 papyrus, a Hellenistic text from Egypt (with some Persian-period content), includes seemingly unrelated narratives, ritual material, and poetry: a story about traveling Judeans, a marriage ritual involving goddesses, and poems (see van der Toorn 2017). The material is considerably older than the document; the psalms (van der Toorn suggests) could be Israelite (ibid., 649). The script is demotic but the language is Aramaic, illustrating that uniformity of language and script was not the only scribal norm. The Amherst 63 papyrus, then, exemplifies the practice of creating long Aramaic documents with material from various sources.

Explaining the peculiarities of the Aramaic section in Ezra as representing an archival document can account for how it fits with, and reflects, Persian-period conventions. However, this does not itself establish the historical reliability, origins, dates, and purpose(s) of the material in the present context.

ORIGINS AND AUTHENTICITY

Most of the Aramaic material in Ezra 4–6 purports to be official documents from the Persian period, but its origin and historical reliability have been questioned since the

late nineteenth century. Some scholars, like Torrey (1896, 1910), completely dismissed its historical reliability. Most, however, like Meyer (1896, 8–71) and Batten (1913), considered them authentic (see Grabbe 2006, 531–32, for a review of positions).

A range of opinions persists. Gunneweg (1985, 85) argues that there is no reason to suppose that the documents in Ezra 4–6 are any more reliable than the speeches the author composes and places in the mouths of the various characters. Schwiderski's (2000) influential study of the Aramaic in Ezra denies that the letters in Ezra 4–6 can be assigned to the Achaemenid period since their epistolary forms and vocabulary do not fit that period. He holds that the documents reflect Hellenistic-Roman conventions. The forms of salutations/headings in Ezra 4:11 and 5:7, for example, depart from expected Persian-period patterns of address. Furthermore, Schwiderski notes, the use of *l,* "to," as preposition for the addressee in, for example, 5:7 is Hellenistic (ibid., 351–54, 365–68).

Grabbe's (2006) view of Ezra's Aramaic documents is that "no text from the Achaemenid Period looks like them in language, orthography, or epistolary style" (531). Like Schwiderski, he finds a departure in Ezra 4–7 from imperial Aramaic formulas. Building on Schwiderski (specifically, 2000, 354–57 and 375–76), Grabbe notes the confused nature of Ezra 4:8–16, which seems to begin three different times (Ezra 4:8, 9, 11), and the lack of a greeting at either v. 11 or v. 12, where it belongs (ibid., 544). The letter, he adds, is less courteous than one would expect of a letter to the emperor (ibid., 545). As for Artaxerxes' response (4:17–22), Grabbe discerns late forms and questions the likelihood that Persian archives would have had records of Judah's interaction with Mesopotamian rulers (ibid.). He concludes that while some authentic material underlies the present text, it is mostly the work of Jewish scribes (ibid., 551).

Williamson (2008, 41–62) contests Schwiderski's (and Grabbe's) literary/stylistic arguments by calling attention to the recorded diversity that typifies Persian-period documents. Indeed, the very title of Folmer's magisterial work on the subject, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation* (1995), identifies such diversity. Williamson challenges Schwiderski's claim that the linguistic data preclude Persian-period origins for the Aramaic in Ezra 4–7 by giving examples to the contrary.

Williamson, for example, accounts for the stylistic differences between the epistolary features in the letters in Ezra and Persian-period official correspondence. These differences, he notes, pertain primarily to the headings. Williamson (2008, 48–51) therefore illustrates likely editorial activities that would account for the differences. He also shows that the suffixes and vocabulary that Schwiderski confines to the Hellenistic period are demonstrably present during the Persian period (ibid., 52–59). For example, a similar use of the preposition *l* appears in Persian-period Elephantine (*TAD* D 7.33; *TAD* C 1.1, line 101). Moreover, certain terms in the Aramaic of Ezra, such as *bĕʿēl ṭĕʿēm* (e.g., Ezra 4:8), do not appear elsewhere after the Persian period (ibid., 56). Williamson also concludes that the author of EN resisted extensive modifications of the sources (ibid., 47–49).

Steiner (2006, 679–83) also contests linguistic conclusions that deny the possibility of a Persian-period context. Schwiderski's claims are based on comparing Ezra 4–6 with original letters from the period. But, Steiner argues, because Ezra 4–6 is largely archival material, its language and form need to be assessed in relation to similar genres. Schwiderski's basic comparison errs when it overlooks the differences in genre between

the documents and compares letters with copies in archives. Each of these genres relies on different stylistic features. As Steiner shows, Ezra 4–6 reflects the exigencies of archival work and should not be assessed simply as letters. The complex headings in Ezra 4:8–11 are a case in point (ibid., 641–25, esp. 652–55 and 665–73). When properly compared with archives, Steiner concludes, features in Ezra 4–6 confirm the Persian-period context of the Aramaic.

Fried (2012c, 43) sees in Ezra 4 authentic material "updated" in the Hellenistic period by EN's Hellenistic author. She also shows that some of the forms that Grabbe and Schwiderski reserve for the Hellenistic period appear already in Elephantine in the sixth century BCE (2015a, 224–28). Fried (2012c, 46) considers only Ezra 4:11, 17, and 24 as late additions.

Most scholars consider the information in the Artaxerxes correspondence reliable but belonging with Nehemiah's mission, either before his arrival (so Rowley 1954–1955, 554; Williamson 1985, 171–72; Blenkinsopp 1988, 203–4) or later. Wright (2005, 30–43) places it later since (in his view) neither King Artaxerxes nor Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1–2 appears to know anything about the letters in Ezra 4.

Fried (2012c, 38, 49–50) agrees with Wright about dating Artaxerxes' correspondence after Nehemiah 1–2. Unlike Wright (2005, 31), she considers the correspondence largely reliable and connects it with the letter of Sanballat (Neh 6:5–7). Fried's detailed reconstruction of the events, however, is less persuasive when claiming that Sanballat and his cohorts bribed Rehum to write to the king and that, upon receiving a response, Rehum sent Sanballat and his associates to Jerusalem (ibid., 57–58). She makes a strong case, however, for Ezra 4 as the background for Neh 6:6–7 (ibid., 51) as well as for Neh 4:1–2. Fried (ibid., 52) also calls attention to similar competition between satrapies in Asia Minor: Lydia and Dascylium in the early fourth century BCE, for example (Diodorus Siculus XV.90–93). The conflict in Elephantine, Egypt, and the letters about local Egyptians attacking the Judean temple in 410 BCE (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30) also exemplify local tensions between different groups under Persian rule.

Steiner's hypothesis, that Ezra 4–6 comes from the Nehemiah archives (mentioned in 2 Macc 2:13), while plausible, cannot be confirmed. Nonetheless, the Artaxerxes correspondence most likely refers to some real events before or during Nehemiah's mission. It was inserted early to suit EN's overall agenda. The historical reliability, date, and origin of the rest of the Aramaic material (Ezra 5–6) continue to be debated, but support for the temple during Darius's administration seems likely, as does the date of 516/515 BCE for the temple's full restoration. Despite uncertainties, the trend is in favor of considering much of Ezra 4–6 as material fitting Persian-period context. EN's author probably regarded it as authentic (and did not invent it) but also felt free to modify.

History and Purpose(s) of the Aramaic Documents

The function of the Artaxerxes correspondence is obvious: to demonstrate outsiders' opposition to the mission of EN and to blame these adversaries for delayed rebuilding. EN therefore places a later dispute with Samaria's leaders at the beginning of reconstruction. The material ignores any indications that opposition to the temple emerged among Judeans as well. But why would an author preserve, reproduce, or invent such documents and blatantly insert them into the narrative out of chronological order rather than weave the information as narrative and adjust the chronology? The most

obvious answer is a desire to convey veracity. Actual documents can assure the reader that the writer preserves genuine information.

Williamson (1985, 57) concludes that the editor sought to utilize "material which was available to him from his collection of official documents." According to Williamson, the editor of the latest stratum of EN (Ezra 1–6) was prevented from inserting the material in its proper chronological setting by the already fixed form of the other sections of EN. Japhet (1991c, 183–84) emphasizes EN's need to account for the delay in building the temple. For the author of EN, only one thing explains this delay: "interruptions from without, enforced by the authority of the Persian government." Although EN's account conflicts with the evidence of Haggai, Zechariah, and extrabiblical sources, it serves the book's agenda. Japhet regards the problems in Ezra 4 as a major clue to EN's notion of historiography. EN's author preferred linking documents, even in tension with chronological or historical context, instead of writing his own account. The refusal to harmonize the documents with the contexts demonstrates the integrity of the author as historian (ibid., 184). According to Japhet, this integrity is further apparent when the author also retains a tension between his own position and that of his sources, and does not harmonize the two (ibid.).

Arnold (1996) and Berman (2006, 2007) add a layer to the purpose of this archival record in EN. For Arnold (1996, 1–15), it allows an author to reproduce a different point of view. Berman (2006, 187), similarly, suggests that the first-person plural "we" within the report (Ezra 5:9) introduces a third-party perspective, specifically represented by Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel. As a result, outsiders confirm the Judean claims, while also validating Persian support.

For Laird (2016, 156), "Ezra 4–6 reflects negotiations with outsiders from two different perspectives. Ezra 4 presents communication *with* the monarch by those external to Yehud. Ezra 5–6 represents the insider's presentation of how to interact or present oneself *to* those outside the community—in particular the imperial and provincial authorities."

One can only speculate about the historical conditions that prompted the literary rearranging of such sources. But something more definite can be said about the resulting impact. First and foremost, the correspondence in the present location allows EN to claim that the community's commitment to building YHWH's house never slackened (but see Hag 1). This picture may be in tension with a reality in which other Judeans resisted the rebuilding for a variety of economic (expensive), political (reflecting diaspora and Persian interests), and/or religious (centralized, professional male cult) reasons. Additionally, reproducing documents underscores EN's emphasis on documents as a decisive force in shaping historical developments. Written documents prove to be all the ammunition that the opponents needed (see Eskenazi 1988a, 54–59). They prove an equally powerful tool for reversing opposition in Ezra 5–6.

CONCLUSIONS

Debates about the Aramaic documents in Ezra 4–6 continue. The mixture of early and late Aramaic forms, syntax, and style incline most scholars today to suppose some actual Persian-period documents, but also heavy Judean editing. That most of Ezra 4 belongs to the time of Nehemiah is the best explanation. Its purpose here is clear: to show external opposition to rebuilding and to blame it for delays. The Aramaic documents in Ezra 4–6 (whether genuine or fabricated) highlight the power of written texts.

They also introduce a style of historiography unique to EN in the Bible and unusual outside it. In embedding documents overtly into the narrative, EN anticipates modern modes of historiography that validate information by means of reproduced documents. In EN, the obstacles documented in Ezra 4 will be reversed point by point by documents in Ezra 5–6. This function is evident whether one sees Ezra 4 as a distinct insertion or, as Steiner suggests, integral to a larger archival document.

C. Obstacles Overcome: Successful Rebuilding of the Temple (5:1–6:18)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra 5–6 describes how the Judeans successfully overcame obstacles and finished rebuilding the temple in 516/515 BCE. The narrative, still in Aramaic, begins as the Judeans resume building (Ezra 5:1–2). It concludes with their successful restoration of the temple and its cult (6:13–18).

Accordingly, work on the temple resumes in 520 BCE (Ezra 4:24), prompted by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (5:1–2). The satrap Tattenai reports this to King Darius (5:3–17), and the king approves the work and offers additional support for it. Thanks to the beneficence of both Israel's God and the Persian kings (see 6:14–15), the people, under the leadership of the elders, finally fully restore the temple and the cult (6:14–18). The narrator emphasizes Judean jurisdiction over the restored temple and cult (6:6–7).

In EN's presentation, events in Ezra 5–6 mirror those of Ezra 4, depicting a point-by-point reversal of the obstacles to building (see Eskenazi 1988a; Mallau 1988; Matzal 2000, 566; for details, see the Comments at Ezra 5:1–17). Ezra 4 ends with the suspension of the work (Ezra 4:24); Ezra 6:14–18, with successful completion.

Core events in Ezra 5–6 seem historically credible once shorn of certain editorial embellishment and despite some inconsistencies. Most likely they describe the actual beginning of the work (as Hag 1 implies) rather than a resumption: Tattenai, the governor/satrap named in Ezra 5:3, appears in extrabiblical sources. Cyrus's memorandum in Ezra 6:3–5 resembles Persian-period memoranda authorizing temple restoration (see *TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32). While some elements, like Darius's generosity, most likely belong to a Judean hand, the basic procedures conform to Persian-period administrative patterns. Scholars largely concur that the temple was indeed complete by 516/515 BCE (see, e.g., Bedford 2001).

The structure of Ezra 5:1–6:18 is as follows:

1. Renewed building activities and inquiry (5:1–17)
2. King Darius's supportive response (6:1–12; contrast with 4:17–22)
3. Results: The temple and its cult are fully restored (6:13–18; contrast with 4:23–24)

1. RENEWED BUILDING ACTIVITIES AND INQUIRY (5:1–17)

5 [1]And Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Berachiah son of Iddo the prophets prophesied to the Judeans in Yehud and in Jerusalem in the name of Israel's

God upon them. [2]Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak rose up to build the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and with them the prophets of God supporting them.

[3]At that time Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and said thus to them: "Who issued you an order to build this house and to finish this structure?" [4]Then we said to them as follows: "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" [5]And the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Judeans and they did not stop them until an order could go to Darius and then they would return a document concerning this.

[6]A copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the envoys of Across-the-River, sent to Darius the king. [7]The message they sent to him; and this is what was written in it: "To Darius the king, all peace! [8]Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Yehud to the house of the great God and it is being built with hewn stone, and timber is placed in its walls; and its work is being done diligently and succeeds in their hands. [9]Then we asked of those elders. We said to them as follows: 'Who issued you an order to build this house and to finish this structure?' [10]And we also asked them their names, to let you know, that we might write the names of the men according to their heads. [11]And thus the message they returned, saying: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are building this house which was built many years before this; and a great king of Israel built it and finished it. [12]But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean; and this house he tore down, and the people he exiled to Babylon. [13]However, in year one of Cyrus, king of Babylon, Cyrus the king issued an order to build this house of God. [14]And even the vessels of the house of God, of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar took out from the temple in Jerusalem and brought with him to the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out from the temple in Babylon and they were given to [one], Sheshbazzar is his name, whom he placed as governor. [15]And he said to him: "Carry these vessels, go, deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be built on its place." [16]Then that Sheshbazzar came, set the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem, and since then till now it is being built and it is not complete.' [17]And now, if it seems good to the king, let it be investigated in the royal treasure houses there in Babylon if by Cyrus an order was issued to build this house of God that is in Jerusalem, and let the king send us his wish concerning this."

Introduction and Structure

Building the temple resumes, implicitly in 520 BCE (the second year of King Darius). The narrative unfolds in a logical sequence. The visiting satrap of the province questions who authorized the work and reports to the king. The satrap, Tattenai, is known from extrabiblical sources, and the core narrative is historically credible. Tattenai's letter informs King Darius of activities in the province of Yehud and requests royal instructions. It describes construction work on a temple (Ezra 5:8), conveys information (5:9–16), and asks the king to investigate the veracity of the information. The letter thereby mirrors the adversarial one to Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:8–16 but reverses its tone and message.

The most controversial features are Sheshbazzar's title and role as the governor who laid the foundations and the omission of Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:14–16). Grabbe (2006, 563), skeptical about the other letters, ranks this one highest in terms of authentic material.

The structure of Ezra 5:1–17 is as follows:

1. The resumption of rebuilding and its consequences (5:1–5; compare with 4:1–5)
2. Tattenai's letter to King Darius (5:6–17; compare with 4:7–16)
    A. Introduction (5:6–7a)
    B. Tattenai's letter (5:7b–17)
        a. Tattenai's account of the inquiry (5:7b–10)
        b. Tattenai's account of the Judeans' response (5:11–16)
        c. Tattenai's request of royal verification and instructions (5:17)

Notes

5:1. *And Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Berachiah son of Iddo the prophets prophesied to the Judeans in Yehud and in Jerusalem in the name of Israel's God upon them.* The work resumes in 520 BCE, the second year of King Darius. Thus the new section follows smoothly Ezra 4:24, which had explained that the work halted until the second year of King Darius. Ezra 5:1 could as easily be attached to 4:5. In 1 Esdras, renewal follows the commissioning of Zerubbabel by King Darius (1 Esd 3:1–5:55) without the anachronistic section about Artaxerxes in Ezra 4 (1 Esd 5:56–73). First Esdras 6:1 inserts, "In the second year of the reign of Darius," fixing the date that MT Ezra 5:1 implies.

Haggai . . . and Zechariah. Each of these two prophets promotes the restoration of the temple and the cult in the two books that bear their names. Both champion Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua in EN). Their dates overlap (520 BCE according to Haggai in Hag 1:1, 2:1, 2:10; Zech 1:1, 1:7, and 518 BCE according to Zech 7:1). But neither prophet mentions the other.

Williamson (1983) supposes that EN relied on the books of Haggai and Zechariah (also Williamson 1985, xxiv). If so, pairing the two is EN's own interpretation of the reconstruction, reflecting EN's persistent pairing of leaders, one a priest (Zechariah; see "Iddo" in the Notes below) and the other not a priest (Haggai). Such pairs include also Zerubbabel (not a priest) and Jeshua (priest), as well as Ezra (priest) and Nehemiah (not a priest). The diarchy and separation of powers mirror the roles of Moses and Aaron.

By beginning the successful building efforts with the two prophets, EN emphasizes internal Judean initiative under divine guidance. EN, however, tempers Haggai's and Zechariah's expectations of glory, confining their messages to the temple's restoration.

Haggai and Zechariah, unlike EN, mention no earlier building attempts or opposing peoples of the land. Persian monarchs play no role in their books. Their presentation is more historically reliable. The purposes of the temple differ in the three accounts. Nevertheless, one can detect a shared pool of information, used differently by writers with distinct agendas. EN can be read as a revision of Haggai and Zechariah. EN does not reproduce the prophets' words (in contrast to its long citations of written documents).

Haggai the prophet. This title (without patronym) appears several times in the book of Haggai (Hag 1:1, 3; 2:1, 10). The frequency of the name Haggai in the postexilic era

in extrabiblical sources (*TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22, and in Babylonian records), along with the missing patronym, probably accounts for repeatedly specifying "prophet." First Esdras omits the title here (on Haggai's possible origin in the diaspora, see Meyers and Meyers 1987, 8–9).

Superscriptions in Haggai date Haggai's work precisely to 520 BCE, beginning in the sixth month (Hag 1:1) and ending in the ninth (Hag 2:10, 20), a time within which the temple foundations were set. Haggai mentions no prior attempts to build the temple. In Haggai, the people's apathy (not outside opposition) has prevented rebuilding the temple earlier—a picture that conflicts with that in Ezra 4 but is the more reliable history. Haggai addresses "Zerubbabel the governor" (using the Aramaic term *peḥâ*) and "Joshua the high priest"—titles that EN never uses for them.

Haggai attributes economic problems in Judah and Jerusalem to the neglect of God's house, chastising the people for their attention to their own dwellings instead of God's house. He promises that prosperity will follow the building of the temple (Hag 1:1–11) and does not even hint at external obstacles. Haggai's audience includes "all the people of the land" (Hag 2:4), apparently the Judeans. Most scholars rightly conclude that Haggai's account is the more accurate (see, e.g., Bedford 2001, 308). Blaming the adversarial people in the land for delays (Ezra 4) is thus EN's retrojection, reflecting subsequent tensions.

Haggai 2:3 registers the disappointing size of the new foundations. He promises Zerubbabel a grand future as God's chosen signet ring, associating him with great expectations (Hag 2:21–23). In EN (Ezra 5:1 and 6:14), Haggai's role is circumscribed, urging the building of the temple and nothing else.

Zechariah son of Berachiah son of Iddo. Zechariah means "Yah [i.e., YHWH] remembers." Superscriptions in the book of Zechariah date his beginning in the second year of Darius (520 BCE in Zech 1:1) and ending in the fourth (518 BCE in Zech 7:1). Zechariah seems to be a priest (see Notes at "Iddo" below). His prophecies in Zechariah 1–8 illustrate preoccupation with the temple and cultic procedures. Meyers and Meyers (1987, xlv) hypothesize that combining Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 may have been done in preparation for the completion of the temple. Like Haggai, Zechariah connects prosperity with the temple's restoration.

Several distinctive messages in Zechariah are relevant to EN. First, Zechariah identifies Joshua with his fullest title ("Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest," Zech 6:11) yet mentions Zerubbabel without patronym or title and less often. References to two crowns (Zech 6:11), two figures (Zech 6:12–13), and two olive trees, presumably the anointed ones (Zech 4:1–14), intimate a diarchy. Nevertheless, for Zechariah, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it" (Zech 4:9). The first part of the proclamation matches that in Ezra 3:8–13 but is inconsistent with Ezra 5:16, which names Sheshbazzar as founder and is silent about Zerubbabel at the completion.

Second, Zechariah envisions the city as a whole as God's chosen place. God's protection is a wall of fire, encompassing the city (Zech 2:9), not just the temple. Similarly, the city as a whole in EN, not the temple, is called *qōdeš* (Neh 11:1, 18).

Third, Zechariah mentions those from Babylonia who provided gold and silver (Zech 6:9–11). This agrees with EN's general depiction in which those in the diaspora

support Judah. The names of those from Babylonia in Zechariah do not appear, however, in EN (except for a Tobiah in Zech 6:10).

Like Haggai, Zechariah expects a dramatic economic improvement to result from the founding of the temple (Zech 8:1–13). Also like Haggai, he registers disappointment by some over the comparatively puny foundations (Zech 4:10). But Zechariah also includes modest expectations: the peaceful presence of the very young and the old in the town's squares (Zech 8:4–5). Zechariah calls for spiritual not military action (Zech 4:6–10) and invests the current priest Joshua with much power (Zech 3:6–10, 6:11).

Iddo. Zechariah 1:1 (like 1:7) mentions Iddo as Zechariah's grandfather. Nehemiah 12:16 mentions a Zechariah, descendant of Iddo, among the priestly families, possibly the same man. It is difficult, however, to be sure, given that the name Zechariah is common in this era (it appears in *TAD* B 2.1.5 // Cowley 5, and six other times in the Elephantine papyri). It is not clear why EN omits Berechiah, Zechariah's father in Zech 1:1 (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 91–93). The name Iddo in Ezra 8:17, referring to a leader in Casiphia, has a different spelling there.

the prophets. Aramaic *nĕbhî'â* in K, and *nĕbhîyā'* in Q. The syntax is slightly awkward, suggesting a clarifying addition.

Yehud. This Aramaic form of Judah is the official name of the province in Achaemenid-period sources. Hundreds of *yĕhûd* seal impressions and jar handles from Judah in the Persian period have been found (see Lipschits and Vanderhooft 2011, as well as "we went to the province of Yehud" in Notes at Ezra 5:8 and "Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period" in the Introduction).

upon them. Williamson (1985, 70 n. 1b) points out the ambiguities of "them"—Israel or the prophets? The translation seeks to convey this ambiguity. The "them" also implies a third-person perspective, which suggests to Arnold (1996) and Berman (2006) a narrator who is not himself cast as a Judean (see "Then we said to them as follows" in Notes at Ezra 5:4 and the Comments at Ezra 4:7–24).

5:2. *Then Zerubbabel . . . and Jeshua . . . rose up.* Zerubbabel and Jeshua, with their patronyms, appear here and elsewhere in EN, but without their respective titles ("governor" in MT Hag 1:1; "high priest" in Haggai and Zechariah [e.g., Hag 1:1; see "Zerubbabel" and "Jeshua" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a]). In EN, successful work on the temple begins when Zerubbabel and Jeshua respond to the prophets.

to build. EN distinguishes between temple founding and temple building. The founding takes place in the second year of their arrival (Ezra 3), implicitly at the time of Cyrus. Ezra 5:1–2 is a resumption of the work in Darius's second year. Historically, the descriptions in chapters 3 and 5 may belong to a single event in the second year of Darius (520 BCE), perhaps also the second year of the arrival of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (so 1 Esd 5:56). By splitting the event, EN not only explains the delay but also presents the building of God's house as a lengthy process with various stages, beginning with the building of the altar in King Cyrus's time. This expansion allows Ezra 5:16 to claim a continuous project from the time of King Cyrus. Ezra 5, without Ezra 4, appears to be in harmony with Haggai and Zechariah. All three sources agree that in the second year of Darius (520 BCE), Haggai and Zechariah urged, in God's name, the building of the temple. Ezra 5:16, however, credits Sheshbazzar, not Zerubbabel, with the founding.

5:3. *At that time.* The vague phrase introduces Tattenai's visit, without recording the time and purpose. One can suppose a routine visit by this high-ranking Persian official during which he happens to learn about building activities. Fried (2015a, 252) dates the event specifically to the seventh month of Darius's second year, on the basis of silence regarding Zerubbabel in the letter that follows. But the argument is not persuasive (see below).

Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River . . . came to them. The LXX has the name *Thanthanai* and 1 Esd 6:3 has "Sissines governor of Syria and Phoenicia" (a common designation in Herodotus for the Levant). Tattenai is the first named governor in EN. Extrabiblical sources mention such a governor in Darius's time. A tablet from March 21, 520 BCE, mentions Ushtanu, a satrap of Babylonia and Across-the-River, to whom Tattannu was a subordinate (when the two provinces were still a single satrapy). According to Rainey (1969, 53), "This Tattannu was only governor of 'Beyond the River.' Several tablets from his personal archive are known, the key one dating June 5, 502 B.C." Tattenai was possibly a non-Persian, although it is generally supposed that "from the time of Darius I governors of satrapies were Persian" (J. M. Cook 1983, 173). (For more on Tattenai, see Ungnad 1940; Olmstead 1944; Stolper 1989a and 1989b, 289–290; Briant 2002, 487; and Kuhrt 2007, 706). The so-called Tattannu Archives suggest a prosperous family, like the Murashu family, whose activities span the reigns of Darius and Xerxes (van Driel 1987, 176–79).

Fried (2015a, 244) concludes that if the letter is authentic (she thinks it is), "then Tattenai must have investigated Jerusalem" because it was "incumbent on every Persian official to know every detail about everything that occurs in his jurisdiction." Tattenai's visit therefore had to be in Darius's second year, his first year in office (ibid.). This conclusion overestimates Persian propaganda and rhetoric about Persian tight supervision. As the Elephantine letters show, Egypt's governor was unaware in 410 BCE of the attack on the Judean temple in Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.7.30). Territories far from the center of the empire, especially without financial or military significance, most likely escaped the watchful eyes of the royal court most of the time.

governor. Aramaic *peḥâ;* LXX, *eparchos.* The term designates a high-ranking official in the Persian administration but can apply to either a satrap or the chief administrator of smaller subunits. Small provinces like Judah, Samaria, or Ammon would have been accountable to a governor or satrap of the entire satrapy Across-the-River, as well as to local governors like Sheshbazzar (Ezra 5:14) and Zerubbabel (Hag 1:1). There is no contradiction therefore in calling Tattenai "governor of Across-the-River" and Zerubbabel governor of Judah, a subunit in that province. The correspondence that follows names only Sheshbazzar as the governor of Judah, appointed by Cyrus (Ezra 5:11–16).

Shethar-bozenai. Whereas Tattenai's name and high office are corroborated by extrabiblical material, nothing more is known about Shethar-bozenai. A similar name in *TAD* B 2.1.16 // Cowley 5 suggests a Persian name. His position in the list implies a subordinate of Tattenai, possibly a secretary or scribe like Shimshai (Ezra 4:8).

their associates. The reference to an entourage conforms to Achaemenid bureaucratic administrative patterns, while highlighting the symmetry with the opposition in Ezra 4.

came to them. The expression suggests a routine meeting. The NJPS has "descended upon them." Berman (2007, 13) needlessly supposes a hostile encounter from the

combination of the two words "come" and *ʿal* ("on" or "over"). But (like *ʿal* in Ezra 4:7 and 11) the preposition in Aramaic does not imply adversity. Aramaic documents from Bactria show that *ʿal* and *ʾel,* that is, "to," are used interchangeably (Naveh and Shaked 2012). That Tattenai does not halt the work (Ezra 5:5) suggests leniency, not antagonism.

Who issued you an order . . . ? Compare the idiom with Ezra 4:19 where Artaxerxes issues a decree. The question is not rhetorical; it inquires about a building permit. Tattenai's letter will repeat these questions (Ezra 5:9–10).

Tattenai's inquiry fits the policies and politics of the period. With the shift in dynastic lines of control, from Cyrus's lineage to Darius's, previous arrangements would require ratification. Unlike the letters in Ezra 4, Tattenai's inquiry shows no hostility (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 127; Clines 1984, 84–85; Williamson 1985, 76). Fleishman's (1995, 84–85) suggestion, that adversaries' complaints instigated the visit, is not persuasive (similarly Fensham 1982, 82; Berman 2007, 27).

to finish this structure. The LXX has "to restore provisions." First Esdras 6:4 includes "this roof and finishing all the other things." From the Elephantine documents one can surmise that "structure" (here and in Ezra 5:9) refers to building material, which Yardeni and Porten translate as "fittings" in *TAD* A 4.7.11. In the Elephantine documents this includes material for building boats, houses, or temples and thus most likely is wood or woodwork. Williamson (1985, 70 n. 3c) rejects translations such as "structure" or "walls" in favor of "material." Wood was used both for structural elements of ancient buildings and for panels as finishing touches.

5:4. *Then we said to them as follows.* The LXX has "they said," while 1 Esdras omits this sentence. The basic statement that follows repeats in Tattenai's report in Ezra 5:10. The sudden use of the first-person plural in MT Ezra 5:4 implies that this report belongs to a member of Tattenai's entourage, not to a Judean source. Many translations (e.g., the NRSV) follow the LXX, which simplifies matters.

Who are the "we"? The MT does not specify, but the word points to a distinct source for the Aramaic material. The LXX's "they said to them" casts Tattenai and his associates as speakers and the "them" as the Judeans. The MT, however, suggests that we are reading an actual report by some other hand. The report that follows, as the MT presents it, is partly in the first-person plural, and partly in the third person. A pious explanation such as that in Ezra 5:5 (that the eyes of their God were upon them) seems unusual and unlikely in a report by Tattenai and suggests instead Judean editing. But an implied Judean author would be expected to refer in Ezra 5:5 to "our God," not "their God." Berman (2006, 2007) finds in this mention of "we said" the key to the implied author of the Aramaic section: it deliberately gives an outsider's perspective (whom Berman considers a Samarian).

Berman's attention to the use of an outsider's perspective is important even though there is no reason to infer a specifically Samarian or adversarial perspective. The neutrality of the non-Judean observer aims to vouch for the reliability of the subsequent Judean account. (See further Wills 2008; Eskenazi 2014a.)

What are the names. The inquiry about the names, like the one about the authorization, is "standard procedure." The reporter assures the reader (implied and actual) that all the necessary information is available, even if not reproduced

men. The workers; see Notes at Ezra 4:21.

5:5. *And the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Judeans and they did not stop them.* In contrast to the previous encounter with outsiders (Ezra 4:1–5 and 4:21–23), divine protection allows the work to continue. The mention of eyes echoes Persian administrative vocabulary about the watchful eyes of the king.

the elders. The LXX has *aichmalōsian,* "captivity," reading *šābhê* instead, as in Ezra 2:1. The orthography of the two words in Hebrew is identical. References to elders in EN are pronounced in the Aramaic sections (Ezra 5:5, 9; 6:7, 8, 14). The Hebrew consonants also could mean "returnees" (to Judah). Conceivably, a double entendre is at play. First Esdras 6:5 elaborates: "Yet the elders of the Jews were dealt with kindly, for the providence of the Lord was over the captives."

The prominent role of the elders, in lieu of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, continues EN's emphasis on the community. It is also a realistic feature in such correspondence where individual names would be meaningless to the intended readers. On the political importance of elders in biblical Israel as a sign of communal engagement, see Brett 2019, 1–13.

they did not stop them. The contrast with Ezra 4:23, where opponents did stop them, introduces the reversals that follow.

until an order could go to Darius. As in Ezra 4, a report to the king about local activities is necessary. Action must await his response.

document. The LXX has "tribute-gatherer," as in Ezra 4:18 and 23.

5:6. *A copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River and Shetharbozenai and his associates, the envoys of Across-the-River, sent.* Tattenai's letter (Ezra 5:6–17) faithfully records the events in Ezra 5:1–5 but gives the Judeans a voice (5:11–16) before asking for instructions (5:17).

copy. An indication that the letter is abbreviated (Kochman and Heltzer 1985). This explains the absence of common salutations and other formalities and fits Steiner's (2006) claim that Ezra 4–6 constitutes an archival source.

Tattenai . . . and his associates. This letter, unlike the earlier by Rehum and other adversaries, comes from the officials in charge of the entire province.

envoys. Aramaic *ʾăpharsĕkāyēʾ*. This Persian term resembles *ʾăpharsatkāyēʾ* and *ʾăpharsāyē* in Ezra 4:9 (translated there as "Judges" and "Persians," respectively). It could refer to officials or ethnicities such as Persians (Jerusalmi 1978, 19). The LXX takes it as an ethnic group, and 1 Esdras as "officials." Fried (2015a, 245) prefers "examiners."

sent. A singular verb, common in expressing unity of purpose or the priority of the first named individual.

5:7. *To Darius the king, all peace!* The introduction and salutations are brief, given the nature of the report as archival copy. This idiomatic greeting (Fitzmyer 1979, 205–17) does not appear in the Elephantine papyri.

all peace. Aramaic *šĕlāmāʾ kōllāʾ*. See Notes at Ezra 4:7 and 17. *TAD* A 4.7.1 uses *šlm* alone in its salutation.

5:8. *Be it known to the king.* As in Ezra 4:12.

we went to the province of Yehud. First Esdras 6:8–9 has "when we went to the country of Judea and entered the city of Jerusalem, we found the elders of the Jews, who had been in exile, building in the city of Jerusalem a great new house for the Lord."

The reference to Yehud as a province in Tattenai's letter plays an important role in constructing the history of Persian-period Judah. Alt (1953) supposed that Judah was

subsumed under Samaria until the time of Nehemiah. Archaeological discoveries such as the *yhwd* seal impressions indicate that Judah or Yehud became a province under the Babylonians and continued as such under Persian rule (see the Introduction). The archaeological information contributes to this letter's credibility (as in, e.g., Grabbe 1998, 131). Conversely, the letter supports the archaeological conclusions.

the house of the great God. Tattenai does not mention Jerusalem. This omission would make practical sense: the city would be meaningless to high officials in the Persian court. First Esdras adds that the builders had returned from exile. However, there is no need to emend the text on the basis of 1 Esdras as do Williamson (1985, 68) and Blenkinsopp (1988, 118) by adding Jerusalem. Nor is it necessary to conclude on this basis that the authors are Judeans (as does Gunneweg [1985, 100]).

the great God. Although grammar allows translating "the great house of God," context prevents envisioning a great house. The expression "great" from the governor's pen is unexpected. In the Achaemenid context the great God was Ahuramazda (note "the great Ahuramazda" in Darius's building inscription [Lecoq 1997, 229]). Persepolis Fortification Tablets 353 and 354 exemplify such official use (Williamson 1985, 78; Hallock 1969). Fleishman (1995, 87) suggests that the writers may wish to use a neutral term "to prevent any link between their religion and that of the Jews who were their subjects." But the effect is the reverse: this title suggests correspondence.

and it is being built. The Aramaic does not indicate who does the building. Expanding on the basis of 1 Esd 6:8–9, Williamson (1985, 68) adds to the translation "and found the elders of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem building," and Blenkinsopp (1988, 118) adds "being rebuilt by the elders in the city of Jerusalem."

hewn stone. The LXX has "chosen stones." First Esdras 6:9 could mean "polished." Zer Kavod (1948; 1988, 37) suggests "large stones" too big to carry and therefore rolled as in 1 Kgs 6:7. This new detail will find its support in Cyrus's memorandum, which likewise specifies this type of stone. Although the exact nature of the craftsmanship specified by the term remains obscure, one may consider something like marble. The use of marble for temples in this period is well attested, e.g., the Elgin Marbles (fifth century BCE) from the Acropolis. The variety of uses of the Akkadian cognate allows for such an understanding (Williamson 1991a, 47–49).

Williamson (1990, 86) concludes that the most satisfactory way to understand the term is the sense suggested by *CAD* for *galālu* 2, namely, "stone treated in a specific way" in Akkadian, "specially selected stone." Williamson (1991a, 47) also points out that about a quarter of the Aramaic texts from Persepolis mention *zy gll;* this information is apparently important to the Achaemenid administration, even if its meaning today is no longer certain. Verbs from *g.l.l.* refer to rolling, including rolling stones (see, e.g., Gen 29:3). Fleishman (1995, 87) regards this detail in Tattenai's message as implying that the "the work was well planned, that the Jews had the ability to execute a complex project."

and timber is placed in its walls. The details are very few and general but consistent with material for temples mentioned in Ezra 3 and in the Elephantine papyri (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30). The message indicates that the walls are already up. EN never describes what was actually built. The few additional details in Ezra 6:3–4 elaborate on what was authorized but not what in fact was done.

work . . . diligently and succeeds in their hands. Tattenai's letter does not identify the builders as returnees, in contrast with Rehum's letter and 1 Esd 6:8–9.

Several linguistic features persuade Grabbe (2006, 546–48) and Fried (2015a) of the authenticity of this portion of the letter: the use of *asparna,* "diligently," and the spelling of "in their hands," along with "their names" and "their heads" in Ezra 5:10. Apparently, these types of spelling disappear after the Achaemenid period (Fried 2015a, 249).

diligently. Aramaic *asparna* means "speedily" or "quickly," "with dispatch" (NJPS), conveying both swiftness and precise compliance. This distinctly Persian-period term appears in the Bible only in EN's royal correspondence (Ezra 5:8; 6:8, 12; 6:13; 7:17, 21, 26).

5:9. *Then we asked of those elders.* Tattenai's report accurately records the questions to the builders in Ezra 5:3–4. The letter demonstrates a concern with proper authority and procedure. The builders' names are not included. As in Ezra 5:4–6, the elders are the main spokespeople, with no mention of individual leaders. Ethnic or religious identity is not mentioned.

we asked. Fleishman (1995) rightly draws attention to the legal force of this inquiry represented in the verb *š.'.l.* It is not necessary, however, to conclude (as Fleishman does) that the questioning implies a suspicion of revolt (ibid., 90). See the prevalent, positive use of the verb in Esther (e.g., Esth 5:6).

Who issued you an order. The near verbatim repetition of the narrator's question in Ezra 5:3 confirms the reliability of Tattenai's report and also highlights what is at stake: the source of authority has to be verified.

5:10. *And we also asked them their names, to let you know.* Still accurately reporting what Ezra 5:3–4 describes, the letter displays accountability and commitment to identifying responsible individuals. It assures the king (and readers) that correct procedure was followed and all required information is available.

5:11. *We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth.* The Judeans' devout nature is vouched for first. The "international" designation of God, without naming Israel's God, allows the intended reader(s), implicitly Darius, to suppose a common religious horizon. The Judeans explain why and how the temple was destroyed (5:12) and why and how it is being rebuilt (5:13–15).

we are building this house which was built many years before. The antiquity of the house is crucial as proof of continuity. Restoration of ancient cults was respected and sometimes supported by the Persian court. Antiquity as legitimation appears also in Elephantine regarding the rebuilding of the Judean temple (*TAD* A 4.7.13–14, 4.8.12–13 // Cowley 30 and 31).

a great king of Israel. Presumably Solomon; the name would be meaningless to Persian authorities.

5:12. *our fathers angered the God of heaven.* Tactfully, the report skirts any issues of rebellion against Babylonia. The theology corresponds to that of the Deuteronomistic History but ought not therefore exclude a genuine response to a Persian investigator. The explanation comports with widespread ANE theologies that attribute the destruction of sanctuaries to divine action. First Esdras 6:14 adds "strong" and 1 Esd 6:15 has "sinned against," not "angered."

he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Chaldean. While accurately recording Judah's earlier fate, details regarding Nebuchadnezzar (who is familiar to the intended audience) also establish that Babylonians, not Persians, caused the destruction.

hand. The LXX and 1 Esdras have plural "hands."

Chaldean. Aramaic *kasdāyāʾ*. Nebuchadnezzar belonged to the Chaldean tribe that gained power under his father's leadership. The term designates what we would call "nationality" or family affiliation. This is how the Bible designates the Babylonians (*kasdîm;* e.g., 2 Kgs 25:26). The word first appears as Abram's birthplace in Gen 11:26. The Hebrew and Aramaic closely resemble the Akkadian *kasdu.*

this house he tore down, and the people he exiled to Babylon. The "he" could be either the king or God.

5:13. *However, in year one of Cyrus, king of Babylon, Cyrus the king issued an order to build this house of God.* At last a direct answer to the questions raised in Ezra 5:3 and 5:9: Cyrus had already authorized the building. Note the emphasis on "Cyrus the king," underscoring the authorizing source.

king of Babylon. The LXX omits "Babylon" and the Peshitta has "Persia" instead. Cyrus was king of Babylon by taking control of it and replacing its dynastic rulers (as recorded on the Cyrus Cylinder). Designating Cyrus as king of Babylon highlights that Cyrus reverses the actions of the earlier Babylonian king (Ezra 5:12) and also signals loyalty to the Achaemenid dynasty.

5:14. *the vessels of the house of God.* The mention of the vessels underscores Cyrus's generosity. The return of the vessels features prominently in all accounts of the reconstruction and symbolizes continuity. Fried (2015a, 21–30, esp. 28–30) interprets the return of the vessels as analogous to the restoration of the divine images in ANE sources (on the vessels, see the Comments at Ezra 1:7–11).

which Nebuchadnezzar took out . . . and brought . . . to the temple of Babylon, these Cyrus the king took out from the temple in Babylon. The speakers report how Cyrus systematically reversed the work of Nebuchadnezzar. In contrast to Ezra 1:7–11, there is no itemized list. Each mention of the vessels' return in Ezra 1–6 also emphasizes the transport to and from the temple in Babylon (Ezra 1:7, 5:14, and 6:5), but none says what finally happened to them.

temple. Aramaic *hêkhĕlāʾ*. The LXX and 1 Esd 6:18 have "house."

they were given to [one], Sheshbazzar is his name, whom he placed as governor. This brief yet significant recollection of Sheshbazzar establishes him again as the first Judean authority over the postexilic community. If the authors of Ezra 1 drew their information from the Aramaic material (so Williamson 1983), then the title "governor" best reflects the intended meaning of *nāśîʾ* in Ezra 1:8.

According to the present report, Cyrus directly commissioned Sheshbazzar not only to bring the vessels but also to build the temple. Ezra 1, instead, extends the commissioning to the entire community. The awkward syntax "Sheshbazzar is his name" resembles forms of the idiom in both the Persian-period Behistun Inscription and the Elephantine papyri, contributing to claims of authenticity (see Steiner 2006, 644–45, and Fried 2015a, 251). The present letter does not mention Zerubbabel. First Esdras 6:18 includes Zerubbabel with Sheshbazzar here (but not in Ezra 6:20, where Sheshbazzar appears again).

governor. The LXX has "Sasabasar, the treasurer over the treasuries." Compare the LXX at Ezra 1:8, where Sasabasar is *archōn.* Sheshbazzar's title illustrates a political recognition of Judah as a distinct province already in Cyrus's time. MT Haggai mentions only Zerubbabel as "governor" at the time of Darius and as the founder of the

temple. The tension between the various accounts had prompted some to conclude that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are the same person, possessing two names, as is common in texts about the Persian period (e.g., Esther's and Daniel's double names). But see Japhet's thorough rebuttal (Japhet 1982, 91–98, and 1983a, 226–29, as well as the Comments at Ezra 1:7–11 and the Comments below).

There is no reason to conclude with Fleishman (1995, 89) that the role of the elders and the silence about Zerubbabel mean that Zerubbabel was removed as a result of Tattenai's report.

5:15. *And he said to him: "Carry these vessels."* This account of the commissioning is more detailed than in Ezra 1:8 but says less about the vessels themselves. Rothenbusch (2011, 96) asserts that quoting Cyrus in an official letter is "scarcely conceivable." But see Fried (2015a, 251) and the Achaemenid examples of *TAD* A 4.9.2, which contradict him. First Esdras 6:19 casts this command in the third person: "with the command that."

deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. EN does not describe the vessels' arrival or deposition.

let the house of God be built. By quoting Cyrus directly, as it were, the elders underscore the decisive answer to the question "who gave you permission?"

on its place. This detail emphasizes continuity. This is not a new project but the restoration of an old temple.

5:16. *Then that Sheshbazzar came, set the foundations of the house of God.* In contrast to Ezra 3, Haggai, and Zechariah, Ezra 5:16 credits Sheshbazzar (not Zerubbabel) with the founding of the temple. The Judeans' letter aims to establish the continuity from Cyrus to the present (Williamson 1985, 78; Fleishman 1995, 94–95). Authorization came from Cyrus to Sheshbazzar. Zerubbabel's activities are irrelevant. Similarly, mentioning Sheshbazzar would be superfluous in Haggai and Zechariah, given the prophets' goal: to motivate contemporary Judeans to act.

Since Cyrus initially appointed Sheshbazzar (in Ezra 1), his presence (even if short lived) is germane in a manner that Zerubbabel's is not. Also germane is that the building is a continuous process ever since. The point is that the building permit issued by Cyrus is still in force and in the process of implementation.

and since then till now it is being built and it is not complete. The elders' final line clinches their crucial argument: the activities are continuous and therefore "covered" by the early "permit." Rather than supposing an alternate account, unaware of information in Ezra 1–6, one may appreciate the tact of the elders, Tattenai, the Judeans, and especially the author of this source. Everything is crafted so as to assure the king that building the temple is done according to Persian imperial rule. In contrast to scholars who credit Darius with the decisive role in the commissioning of the temple (see esp. Berquist 1995), EN takes pains to credit Cyrus.

complete. Aramaic *šĕlīm;* "finished" in the NJPS and NRSV. The LXX has *etelesthē.* The cognate in Hebrew carries the meaning of "whole." The underlying sense is restoration to wholeness. In 1 Kgs 7:51 it specifically refers to the completion of Solomon's temple. The LXX's *etelesthē,* like *telos,* designates a destined goal, an end attained. In Hebrew and Aramaic, the verb and noun *of š.l.m.* also pertain to peace (e.g., *šālôm*) and to paying for something (Exod 22:2; *TAD* B 4.2.3 // Cowley 11.7).

5:17. *And now, if it seems good to the king, let it be investigated in the royal treasure houses.* Tattenai's question to King Darius has two aims: first, to verify the accuracy of the elders' claim (Ezra 5:17a); and second, to receive instructions for a follow-up (5:17b). The request for an archival record parallels the search the adversaries propose in Ezra 4:15.

be investigated. The verb, from *b.q.r.,* appears in EN only in the Aramaic portions and refers to an official inquiry (see Notes at Ezra 4:15 and 7:14 regarding Ezra's mission).

royal treasure houses. Aramaic *ginzayyāʾ,* "royal treasury," or "royal archives" (NRSV, NJPS). In the Elephantine documents *gnzʾ* refers to a storehouse of records. The official in charge is accountable not only for preserving the records but for confirming or investigating their veracity (see *TAD* A 6.2.4–13 // Cowley 26, dated 412 BCE).

Storerooms or storehouses of public and private records existed throughout the Persian Empire, with well-known ones in Babylon, Susa (Cameron 1948, 21–22), and Persepolis. Arrian adds Ecbatana to the list (*Anab.* III.16.7; see Cameron 1948, 10).

Ezra 6:1 is different from 5:17, referring to "the house of the documents" (or "of books"), translated as "the archives." While the examples from Ezra 5–6 and Elephantine focus on records' storage, the related term in 7:20 (*ginzê malkāʾ,* not *ginzayyāʾ,* as in 5:17 and 6:1) suggests a treasury as a deposit of wealth. So too Esther, *ginzê hammelek,* "the royal *gĕnāzîm*" (Esth 3:9, 4:7; but see this root referring to embroidery of sorts in Ezek 27:24). The Hebrew Bible usually uses the word *ʾôṣar* ("treasure") to designate a treasury in the sense of a storehouse of wealth (e.g., Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:69–70, 10:39, 12:44; also frequently in Chronicles, e.g., 2 Chr 12:9, typically with reference to the temple). In postbiblical Hebrew the term *genizah* becomes the place where sacred documents are deposited, including damaged ones.

there in Babylon. The vessels were stored in Babylon (so Ezra 5:14; see also at 6:1), but the record will be found elsewhere (6:2).

let the king send us his wish. Tattenai requests fresh authorization from Darius (who was not a descendant of Cyrus; see the Introduction).

wish. Aramaic *rĕʿût,* an unusual term. In Ezra 7:18 it relates to God. The LXX avoids this term, stating "let the king send to us when he has learned concerning this."

Comments

Ezra 5–6 describes how the Judeans successfully overcame obstacles (delineated in Ezra 4) and finished rebuilding the temple. They resume the work, and in Ezra 5 Tattenai, governor of the entire province of Across-the-River (i.e., the satrap), investigates their activities and then reports to King Darius. He respectfully presents the Judeans' claims. The narrative's arrangement serves specific ideological goals. It describes proper conduct under Persian imperial rule, emphasizing conformity to King Cyrus's original mandate. The elders' response (Ezra 5:11–16) occupies the longest section of Tattenai's report. Their exposition is diplomatically sensitive to crucial issues: the need to underscore the religious, not political, nature of the project and to demonstrate harmony with the vested interests of the empire, with evidence of faithfulness to royal decrees and laws. Official language and records underscore the legality of the project (Laird 2016, 188). As most interpreters agree, basic elements in this account are largely reliable,

namely, that building took place under Darius, between 520 and 516/515 BCE, and that Tattenai was a historical figure.

The main puzzle in the account is the naming of Sheshbazzar as the temple's founder in Ezra 5:16 and the relation to Zerubbabel, whom Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra 3:1–7 credit as founder (see the Notes at Ezra 5:16).

In narrating these events, Ezra 5–6 mirrors and reverses Ezra 4:7–24 point by point (see Eskenazi 1988a; Mallau 1988; Matzal 2000, 566). Ezra 5–6 parallels Ezra 4, which is shaped by similar developments and vocabulary. Both begin with encounters with outsiders who inform the king of building activities by Judeans (4:1–3 // 5:1–4). The rubrics of both letters are similar (4:6–12 // 5:6–10; see Matzal 2000, 56); both include a request for archival investigation (4:15 // 5:17); in both, the king confirms the received information and issues instructions (4:17–22 // 6:1–12); and in both, the informants hasten to implement the king's instructions (4:23 // 6:13). The parallels convey systematic undoing in Ezra 5–6 of the opposition in Ezra 4. Written documents control the process.

Berman (2006, 2007) elaborates on the political significance of handing the microphone (as it were) to a non-Judean observer (Ezra 5:4). This literary device (he argues) creates a seemingly objective account that supports the Judean right to build their temple and vouches for their loyalty to the imperial court.

Three major issues occupy scholarly discussion of Ezra 5:1–17:

1. The historicity of the events in Ezra 5
2. The authenticity and origin of the letter in Ezra 5:6–17
3. The identity and roles of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel

the historicity of the events in ezra 5

As scholars generally agree, the core events in Ezra 5 are both possible and probable, once shorn of certain editorial embellishment. The founding of the temple most likely began during the reign of Darius I in 520 BCE (Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988; Fried 2015a; Bedford 2001), not earlier, as Ezra 3 claims. Haggai and Zechariah confirm the date (Hag 1:1 and Zech 1:1; see Meyers and Meyers 1987 and Petersen 1984). Edelman's (2005, e.g., 332–33) dating this to Artaxerxes I's reign has not found widespread support. Tattenai (Ezra 5:3), who appears in extrabiblical sources as governor of Across-the-River (see Ungnad 1940; Stolper 1989a; Kuhrt 2007, 706), could have played a role.

Several political, administrative, and economic developments make 520 BCE an opportune time for such a building project in Jerusalem. By that time Darius had stabilized his reign. Administrative reforms created an infrastructure conducive to long-term projects. The conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE made the Levant more important strategically than it was during Cyrus's reign. Judah, adjacent to the main routes to Egypt, became more valuable: stability and prosperity there would benefit Persian campaigns in Egypt by facilitating smooth transportation (of troops or taxes) along the coastal route, providing supplies, particularly wine and olive oil. Such prospects also made Judah more attractive for repatriation.

Bedford (2001, 151), while questioning a widespread imperial policy to uphold and sustain local cults, nevertheless considers it probable that Jerusalem did receive permission to rebuild. If there was some early work on the temple during the early Persian

period (as Ezra 3 claims), it was of such small consequence that Haggai and Zechariah display no knowledge of it (ibid., 153).

THE AUTHENTICITY AND ORIGIN OF THE LETTER IN EZRA 5:6–17

Like the other Aramaic documents in EN, the letter in Ezra 5 has been scrutinized for signs of authenticity on the basis of linguistic and epistolary features. It is generally agreed that nothing in the letter defies credibility. Most scholars consider the letter more reliable than other Aramaic portions in Ezra 4–6. Williamson (1985, 2008) and Japhet (1991c, 2019), for example, regard this section as largely authentic in origin but reworked by a Judean hand. Grabbe (2004, 78; 2006, 563), who denies the authenticity of the other Aramaic documents, likewise finds Tattenai's letter in Ezra 5:7–17 plausible and ranks it highest in terms of authenticity. He notes that grammatical forms in the letter are early, thus Persian period, not Hellenistic (e.g., *lĕhōm* rather than *lĕhôn,* "to them," in Ezra 5:9, 10). He considers the conflict between the letter's account and Ezra 3 to support authenticity. But Grabbe (2006, 548) also notes challenges to authenticity and concludes that while much in the letter is authentic, "there is also evidence of intervention by a Jewish author at some point."

Steiner (2006) regards Ezra 5 as part of an authentic archival document that includes all the Aramaic material in Ezra 4–6. Fried (2015a, 253–55) regards the letter as original, composed during the Persian period. Kratz (2005, 51–55) identifies several hands in the composition of Ezra 5 but regards a few of its verses (e.g., Ezra 5:13–16) as a genuine core that, along with 6:3–5, formed the basis for the expanded Aramaic correspondence in Ezra 4–6.

In sum, most scholars consider portions of Ezra 5 to come from a genuine, official document, augmented by a Judean hand, the extent of which is variously assessed. In that sense it is "reliable" even if not "authentic" (Janzen 2000, 623). Whatever the original scope of Tattenai's letter, its current form carefully serves the overall agenda of EN.

THE IDENTITY AND ROLES OF SHESHBAZZAR AND ZERUBBABEL

Tattenai's letter credits Sheshbazzar as founder of the temple (Ezra 5:14–16). This account conflicts both with Ezra 3 and with Haggai and Zechariah, who name Zerubbabel as founder. Moreover, Haggai designates Zerubbabel as governor (Hag 1:1), the title in Ezra 5 of Sheshbazzar. Consequently, the contradictory reports about Sheshbazzar's and Zerubbabel's roles, and the silence about the latter in Tattenai's letter, require explanation.

Sheshbazzar, mentioned only in Ezra 1 and 5 (see NOTES at Ezra 1:8, and Japhet 1982, 91–98, and 1983a, 226–29), remains a shadowy figure in the Bible. The mention in Ezra 5 must be seen in light of the purpose of the Judeans' report. In Ezra 5, the Judeans are answering a specific question, responding to what might cast doubt on the project's legitimacy: Who authorized this building? For EN, Sheshbazzar was a founding figure by the very fact that Cyrus directly commissioned him, even if he did not lay a single stone. Ezra 1:8 titles him a *nāśî'*. As such, he bears wide responsibility (beyond transporting vessels). The specific "spin" in the letter, including the omission of Zerubbabel's name and title, reflects the elders' (or Tattenai's) need to emphasize the antiquity of the project (as Fleishman 1995, 94–95, also notes). For EN, original permission to

rebuild came from Cyrus, who appointed Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:7–11). Zerubbabel's role is irrelevant to the issue at hand.

Fried (2015a, 252) argues, "It is not possible that the Judeans would have claimed that Sheshbazzar had laid the foundation if Zerubbabel had really laid them when Zerubbabel was standing right there." Fried therefore dates Tattenai's visit before Zerubbabel began the work, that is, in the seventh month of Darius's second year (the date in Hag 1:1). Such presumed precision is unnecessary, however, given the rhetorical function of the material, and is not compelling, given the evidence. The elders' main agenda is to assure current authorities that the present activities have been authorized since the time of Cyrus.

In sum, the chief Judean messages are first, that the building of the temple had received Persian authorization; second, that the Judeans respectfully obey Persian authority; third, that there is continuity in building God's house in Jerusalem, that is, activities under Darius are an extension of the same work under Cyrus, hence this is not a new project (Ezra 5:16b) so the builders did not seek a new "permit"; and fourth, that the temple was destroyed for theological reasons and its rebuilding is not a political challenge to imperial rule.

The Judeans' version of Cyrus's decree in Tattenai's letter (Ezra 5:13–16) will prove consistent with the memorandum in Ezra 6:3–5. This (for EN) further testifies to the reliability of the Judeans and their building project (for more on Sheshbazzar, see the Comments at Ezra 1:7–11).

2. King Darius's Supportive Response (6:1–12)

6 [1]Then Darius the king issued an order and they investigated in the archives where the treasures are deposited there in Babylon. [2]And in Ecbatana, in the capital of the province of Media, a scroll was found and thus written in it: "Memorandum: [3]In year one of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued an order: Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, the house shall be built, a place for sacrificing sacrifices; and the foundations supported; its height: 60 cubits; its width: 60 cubits, [4]layers of hewn stone: three; and a layer of timber: one; and the expenses be given from the house of the king. [5]And also the vessels of the house of God, of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar took out from the temple of Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, they will bring back and let it go to the temple in Jerusalem, to its place, deposited in the house of God.

[6]"Now Tattenai, governor of Across-the-River, Shethar-bozenai and their associates, the envoys who are in Across-the-River, be far from there. [7]Leave to the work of this house of God the governor of the Judeans and the elders of the Judeans. Let them build this house on its place. [8]And an order has been issued by me as to what you will do for these elders of the Judeans for the building of this house of God. And from the possessions of the king, of taxes from Across-the-River, exact expenses are to be given to these men diligently to not stop. [9]And whatever is needed, young bulls and rams and lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, in accordance with what the priests in Jerusalem say, let it be given to them day by day without fail; [10]so that they will make offerings of sweet savor to the God of heaven and will pray for the life of the king and his sons. [11]And an order has been issued by me that any person who will alter this message, a beam will be torn out of his house; and he will be lifted

up and impaled upon it, and his house will be made into a dunghill on account of this. [12]And may the God who causes his name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who shall put forth a hand to alter or damage this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I Darius have issued an order. Let it be done diligently."

Introduction and Structure

As the Aramaic narrative continues, King Darius's archival search retrieves a memorandum by Cyrus confirming that he authorized the building of the temple (Ezra 6:1–5). Darius's instructions to Tattenai follow (6:6–12). Darius offers generous provisions for the temple and warns Tattenai against interference with the builders. Significantly, he gives jurisdiction over its building and maintenance to the Judeans (6:6–7).

Ezra 6:1–12 mirrors and reverses Artaxerxes' letter in Ezra 4:17–22, just as 6:13–15 mirrors and reverses 4:23–24. Here, as throughout this section (Ezra 4–6), letters control the action.

Like the other royal documents in EN, Ezra 6:1–12 is scrutinized in terms of authenticity and reliability, and historical information. Scholars tend to accept Cyrus's memorandum in 6:3–5 as a reliable portion of the letter, comparing it with extrabiblical sources. Darius's generous gifts, however, strain credibility. The preponderance of specific Judean terms persuades many scholars that most of this section is not an authentic or reliable royal document.

First Esdras 6:23–34 largely follows the MT. Josephus (*Ant.* XI.iv.6 // XI.97–104) does largely the same but includes opposition by Samaritans (*Ant.* XI.97–99).

The structure of Ezra 6:1–12 is as follows:

1. Introduction: The archival search (6:1–2)
2. King Cyrus's memorandum (6:3–5)
3. King Darius's instructions to Tattenai (6:6–12)
    a. Instructions to permit the rebuilding (6:6–7)
    b. Instructions about royal funding for the temple and cultic service (6:8–10)
    c. Warnings against disobedience and interference (6:11–12a)
    d. Conclusion (6:12b)

Notes

6:1. *Then Darius the king issued an order and they investigated in the archives where the treasures are deposited there in Babylon.* Tattenai's request is heeded and a search is made. If the vessels were taken to Babylon, one would expect the records to be kept there as well. There is no need to suppose, as Gunneweg (1985, 105) and Blenkinsopp (1988, 127) do, a distinct, Judean hand for this connecting tissue. Fried (2015a, 257) considers this part of an Aramaic source.

investigated. The recurrence of the verb (*b.q.r.*) highlights parallels between Ezra 4 and 5–6 (Ezra 4:15, 5:17, and here). See also Notes at Ezra 7:14.

in the archives. Aramaic *bĕbhêt siphrayyāʾ*. Lit. "in the house of the 'books,'" that is, scrolls, tablets, or other written documents. The LXX has *bibliothēkais.* Texts in Mesopotamia during the Neo-Babylonian period were inscribed mostly on tablets made of clay, which was readily available. The use of papyrus and leather for administrative purposes increased during the Persian period.

where the treasures. Treasuries included valuable possessions, materials for distribution, and records of such stored materials and distribution (for details, see "royal treasure houses" in Notes at Ezra 5:17).

6:2. *And in Ecbatana, in the capital of the province of Media, a scroll was found and thus written in it.* It boggles the mind to imagine how such a discovery could have been made given the small size of the memorandum and the size of archival collections. It is likewise surprising that the evidence would be found in Ecbatana, not Babylon. Whether factual or not, the search showcases dedication and efficiency of record keepers in the Persian Empire.

Ecbatana. Lit. *'aḥmĕtâ'.* The LXX omits this name, although 1 Esd 6:23 includes it. Located near today's Hamadan in northwestern Iran, Ecbatana, was the chief royal city of the Median Empire until King Cyrus captured it in 549 BCE. Achaemenid kings resided there several months of the year (during the summer). It remained a strategic center for controlling Central Asia. Its ongoing contact with Babylon is apparent from the records of the Babylonian house of Egibi (Briant 2002, 33).

Ecbatana appears in the Hebrew Bible only here but is mentioned in Deuterocanonical books (Tobit, Judith) and in classical sources (Ekbatanois in Greek, hence Ecbatana). Herodotus mentions that it housed a palace and a treasury (*Hist.* I.110). Cyrus returned there after his conquest of Media (III.153), and it was the seat of power of King Cambyses, Cyrus's son (III.64). Xenophon describes it as the summer habitat of Cyrus (*Cyropaedia* 8.6.22). Arrian specifically mentions its treasury (*Anab.* III.16.7; Cameron 1948, 10). The book of Judith emphasizes the great walls (Jdt 1:2). Tobias, the protagonist in Tobit, meets his bride in Ecbatana and eventually settles there (Tob 5:1–14; see esp. 14:12).

the capital. Alternatively "citadel" or "fortress." The LXX and 1 Esdras have *barei,* a form of *baris,* "fortress" or "palace." The term designates a palace or temple compound or chief city. While fortifications typified such chief cities, temples, and palaces, *bīrtā'* also specifically designates political and economic status. It refers to a seat of power, a royal, administrative, and/or religious center of authority. Darius uses the term in the Aramaic version of the Behistun Inscription from Elephantine to describe major cities he defeated (see the Behistun Inscription in Cowley 1923, lines 2, 5, 31, 46); in the Daliyeh papyri it refers to Samaria (which may not have been fortified at the time; see, e.g., Gropp, Schuller et al. 2001, 4.1). The Elephantine papyri also refer to Elephantine itself with this term (see, e.g., *TAD* A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30). In Esther it is the palace complex, famed for banquets and luxuries. In 1 Chr 29:1 and 19 it refers to the temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah 2:8 and 7:2 both use the Hebrew cognate *bîrâ* in reference to Jerusalem.

a scroll. Aramaic *megillâ.* The LXX has *kephalis,* suggesting a roll, like the Hebrew and Aramaic noun that is derived from *g.l.l.,* "to roll." First Esdras 6:23 has *tomos,* from which "tome" in English is derived but which in Greek refers to a roll or section of papyrus. Most of the tens of thousands available archival records from Achaemenid Mesopotamia are clay tablets, preserved thanks to the resilience of clay in fire. However, there is evidence that other materials were also used for record keeping. Important memoranda in Elephantine are on papyrus. Consequently, there is no need to discount this claim about a scroll (as Gunneweg [1985] and Grätz [2009] do) on the grounds that Persian archives would contain only tablets.

Memorandum. A 408 BCE Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32) exemplifies the genre to which Ezra 6:3–5 largely conforms. Titled *zkrn,* an equivalent to *dikrônâ* in 6:2, the papyrus sums up the response to a petition to rebuild the Judean temple in Elephantine: "Memorandum [*zkrn*] of what Bagohi and Delaiah said to me, saying: Memorandum. You may say in Egypt . . ." (*TAD* A 4.9.1–2). The repetition of "memorandum" in the Elephantine papyrus indicates that the word here is part of the reproduced memorandum itself. There is no other introduction, a feature consistent with Steiner's (2006) claim that the entire section from Ezra 4:7–6:18 is a single archival document incorporated into EN. First Esdras largely corresponds to the MT. Josephus elaborates on the memorandum, transferring to Cyrus's memorandum much that Ezra 6:8–12 assigns to Darius (*Ant.* XI.iv.6 // 99–103).

The authenticity or reliability of the memorandum ranks comparatively high in scholarly estimation (see Williamson 2008; Fried 2015a, 263–64; and the Comments below for details).

6:3. *In year one of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king issued an order: Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, the house shall be built.* The body of the memorandum begins as befits a memorandum for internal record keeping (see *TAD* A 4.9 // Cowley 32). The first line (like Ezra 1:1 and 5:13) places Cyrus's decree in his first year. The absence of a more precise date in the Elephantine memorandum indicates that silence about that here is not unique. The presumed year (here, as in 1:1, which most likely depends on 6:3–5) is 538 BCE.

an order: Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem. Williamson (1985, 68) regards the phrase as a heading for the rest and thus resolves the awkward absence of a conjunction between "order" and "the house of God." The two terms as a construct phrase without explicit conjunction appear in Ezra 5:9. The LXX includes the conjunction *peri.* Blenkinsopp (1988, 123) renders instead, "With respect to the house of God in Jerusalem, let it be . . ."

a place for sacrificing sacrifices. Cultic offerings constitute the sole function of the temple in this memorandum (see also Notes at Ezra 6:9–10). The Hebrew cognate, *z.b.ḥ,* usually indicates animal sacrifices, presumably included here. This detail matters in light of Elephantine, where animal sacrifices that had been offered at the Judean temple to YHW (so *TAD* A 4.7.25–26) were subsequently eliminated (*TAD* A 4.9, 4.10).

and the foundations supported. The sentence is awkward and its meaning uncertain. Williamson (1985, 68) has "let its foundations be retained." Also possible: "and the fire-offerings maintained," based on repointing the noun to mean "fire" (see below). First Esdras 6:24 has "where they sacrifice with perpetual fire." The NJPS has "a base built up high."

foundations. Aramaic *ʾušsôhî.* The term is not fully understood. It resembles *ʾušsayyāʾ,* "foundations," in Ezra 4:12 and 5:16. The LXX has "set foundation," with a different term than the one at 5:16. First Esdras 6:24 has "sacrifice with perpetual fire," which is plausible, given the proximity of the consonants of *ʾušsôhî* to *ʾeššāʾ* or *ʾiššēh,* "fire(s)," in Hebrew (see Lev 1:13, 17). Leviticus 6:6 (NRSV 6:13) mandates a continual fire on the altar. Fried (2015a, 256) thus has "fire offerings are brought." Fire plays a major role in Persian religion and cult, making such a statement applicable in both Persian and Judean contexts. The NRSV has "burnt offerings."

supported. Williamson (1985, 71 n. 3b) links the verb with Akkadian *zabālu,* meaning "to carry." The Hebrew cognate, *s.b.l.,* means "burden" (1 Kgs 5:29) and "burden bearer" (Gen 49:15), but it can also mean provisions, such as food. The support thus could apply to building or to providing for fire offerings. At Elephantine, the Aramaic term indicates both physical and economic support. A contract (dated 427 BCE) includes "we shall serve you (a)s a son or daughter supports [*ysbl*] his father in your lifetime. And at your death we shall support [*nsbl*] Zaccur your son" (*TAD* B 6.3.11–12 // Kraeling 5). See also *TAD* B 3.10.17 // Kraeling 9 (dated 404 BCE), where Yehoishma is said to have supported or maintained (*sbltni)* her aged father.

Kraeling (1953, 186), supposing *ʾuššôhî* a foundation, suggests for Ezra 6:3 "that the old foundations be solicitously preserved." But the perpetual maintenance that the Elephantine papyri indicate also fits well the notion of perpetuity in 1 Esd 6:24 of "perpetual fire." See also the burden bearers constructing the wall at Neh 4:4 and 11.

its height: 60 cubits; its width: 60 cubits. These dimensions and the material listed in the next sentence constitute most of the information regarding the physical nature of the temple. It is woefully limited (Neh 13:4–9 mentions chambers in the temple, but without providing details). A cubit (the length of a forearm) measures roughly 45 centimeters (18 inches). Sixty cubits, then, is about 27 meters (about 90 feet). These dimensions for the restored temple are puzzling. They are incomplete (the length is not specified) and, surprisingly, are greater than some of those given for Solomon's temple. Reactions to the temple's foundations in Ezra 3:12 and Hag 2:3 imply that the new structure fell short when compared with Solomon's temple.

In 1 Kings, Solomon's temple measured 60 cubits in length, 20 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in height (1 Kgs 6:2). Second Chronicles mentions 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide, but then "the length of the porch in front [was equal] to the breadth of the House—20 cubits, and its height was 120" (2 Chr 3:3 NJPS). The omission of length in Ezra 6 can be explained if a square building is envisioned (as Pseudo Rashi supposes). But no available explanation accounts for the great height. First Esdras and Josephus repeat these dimensions. Chronicles' dimensions for Solomon's temple, representing a postexilic perception, is likewise not helpful if 120 is to be reckoned as cubits. Williamson's (1985, 68, 70) emendations of Ezra 6:3 to conform to the measurements in 1 Kgs 6:2 are tempting (height, 30; length, 60; width, 20) but lack textual support. Most likely, the dimensions here reflect problems in transmission (Fried 2015a, 264).

6:4. *layers of hewn stone: three; and a layer of timber.* The "hewn stone" and the wood appeared earlier in Tattenai's report (see "hewn stone" in Notes at Ezra 5:8), describing the building already well in progress. The correspondence between these details in the memorandum and Tattenai's earlier report highlights the care with which the builders are following instructions.

a layer. With most translations, reading *ḥădat,* "new," here as *ʾeḥād,* meaning "one," that is, one layer of wood; so too the LXX.

and the expenses be given from the house of the king. The king's seemingly unlimited financial support defies credibility. It also contradicts Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:2–4, which expects communities to support the project and the builders. Nonetheless, Achaemenid kings prided themselves on supporting temples (as is shown in the Cyrus Cylinder). Such funding was a diplomatic way to build alliances and stability without military action (Lee 2012, 291). Grätz (2006, 410–12) considers this feature to be Hel-

lenistic and thus a sign the memorandum is inauthentic. But as Fried (2015a, 261–62) rightly observes, gifts were a major mechanism by which Persian kings managed their empire. Diodorus Siculus (16.40.2) reports that Artaxerxes III made a gift of three hundred talents of silver to the Greek city of Thebes when it became impoverished. What raises eyebrows in this memorandum, however, is not the financial support itself but the fact that it is *carte blanche.* It should be added that royal support did not mean sending funds from the court to the provinces. Rather, it meant assigning some of the local tribute and taxes to local projects.

Ezra 1:2–4 obligates the people themselves to fund the rebuilding of God's house. Those who do not go up to build must support those who do. One possible historically driven explanation is that Ezra 1 reflects a later situation when royal support for the temple was no longer forthcoming and depended on Judeans (thus the community's pledge to maintain the temple in Neh 10). But the difference also reflects the book's ideology: Ezra 1 emphasizes that the community builds God's house and the community undertakes its support. For EN, royal investment is secondary to that of the community.

6:5. *And also.* This expression often adds emphasis to what follows—in this case, the importance of the vessels' return.

vessels of the house of God . . . which Nebuchadnezzar took out . . . they will bring back. This is the third and final mention of the return of the temple vessels. See "The Restoration of the Temple Vessels" at Ezra 1:7–11 and the Comments there and at Ezra 5:14. Cyrus's decree in 1:2–4 does not mention these vessels. As Ackroyd (1972) rightly notes, the vessels symbolize continuity. In MT Jer 27:16–28:6 they signify restoration. In an aniconic religion such as Israel's, returning the vessels resembles the returning of divine images to Babylonian temples, thereby the return of God to his abode. Cyrus, in the famed Cyrus Cylinder, describes himself as one who restored images as part of "liberating" Babylon." Fried (2015a, 262–63) points to the topos of returning gods in Egypt in the third century BCE, when the Ptolemaic dynasty replaced the Persians. In all these cases, the king takes credit for restoring the images or the gods. The major problem regarding the vessels is that they never seem to have arrived.

deposited in the house of God. The mystery as to the interim location of the vessels or their arrival is never addressed in EN. The various ceremonies of inauguration (Ezra 6:15–18 and Neh 8–12) do not mention the vessels.

deposited. Williamson (1985, 72 n. 6c) suggests "you shall deposit"; similarly Fried (2015a, 256).

6:6. *Now.* This transition, followed by the second-person plural, indicates that Cyrus's memorandum has been incorporated into the letter to Tattenai and serves as a basis for Darius's decision to allow the building to proceed. Such seamless transition is consistent with copies done for archival purposes, when only a segment is excerpted from a larger source (see Steiner 2006). This term for "now" typifies Achaemenid-period letters, which has lent support to the relative reliability of the letter (Steiner 2006, 680; Fried 2015a, 267) against Schwiderski's (2000) claims of a Hellenistic dating. First Esdras 6:27–28 retains the third person.

associates. The LXX has "fellow slaves" or "fellow servants" (here and in Ezra 5:3; 6:6, 13).

be far from there. This instruction is of great significance. The verb *r.ḥ.q.,* followed by the preposition *min,* "to distance oneself," appears several times in the Elephantine

papyri, typically in the context of renouncing property (*TAD* B 2.7.6–7 // Cowley 13 [dated 446 BCE]; *TAD* B 2.8.6, 11 // Cowley 14 [dated 440 BCE]; *TAD* B 2.9.9–11 // Cowley 20 [dated 420 BCE]). See also *mrḥq,* "deed of renunciation," in *TAD* B 2.22 // Cowley 6.22 and *TAD* B 2.8.1.14 // Cowley 14. The expression functions legally as a "quit claim" agreement and probably means the same here (Rundgren 1958) despite Blenkinsopp's (1988, 127) and Williamson's (1985, 81) reservations. As Fried (2015a, 268) (who translates "be satisfied") notes, it is not concerned with physical distancing. The injunction defines the relation between Persian authorities and Jerusalem's cult, restricting the role of the Persian governor/satrap. The same idea is reiterated in v. 7. Williamson (1985, 81), however, doubts that legal renouncing is meant here, given what he considers an ambiguity of the term in the Elephantine papyri (see also Yaron 1961, 81–82); Blenkinsopp (1988, 127) believes that the analogy does not fit well because "Tattenai was neither making an accusation nor staking a claim; he was simply seeking confirmation of a building permit." But the terminology and contexts in Elephantine are too striking to ignore, especially since v. 7 also turns over responsibility for building to the Judeans.

The importance of such a conclusion cannot be overestimated. Blenkinsopp (1988, 127) notes that "it was clearly Tattenai's responsibility to monitor what was going on anywhere within his jurisdiction and the central government would be highly unlikely to exempt any part of it from supervision." Yet the letter specifically prescribes just that: no supervision. This is important to EN's overall agenda, in which forms of Judean authority emerge while under the umbrella of imperial rule (see Eskenazi forthcoming[b]).

6:7. *Leave to the work of this house of God the governor of the Judeans and the elders of the Judeans. Let them build this house on its place.* Having removed certain responsibilities from Tattenai, Darius's letter specifies to whom these now belong: the elders of Judah, including an unnamed local governor. The transfer of responsibility for building does not signal autonomy, but it does shift the credit for, and authority over, the building from the king and his men to the community. Blenkinsopp's (1988, 125) smoother translation is also possible: "Leave the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders alone to continue their work." But it obscures some of the emphases that the more awkward Aramaic conveys.

governor of the Judeans. The title *peḥâ,* "governor," can be used both for Tattenai, the satrap of Across-the-River, and for a local governor. But the designation "governor of the Judeans" rather than "of Judah" is unusual. Some suggest that the reference to this governor is a later insertion (e.g., Fleishman 1995, 100). The awkward syntax contributes to this possibility. First Esdras 6:27 characteristically names Zerubbabel here as a Davidic heir at the helm (cf. 1 Esd 5:5).

There is no need to wonder, as Fried (2015a, 268) does, whether Darius did or did not know the governor's name; it is unlikely that he would have. While the mention of the governor here may be a gloss, as Clines (1984, 93), Blenkinsopp (1988, 127), and Fleischman (1995, 100) suppose, EN depicts with it a critical transfer of power from a Persian governor to local authorities, including the Judean governor and elders (at Ezra 6:8).

6:8. *And an order has been issued by me as to what you will do for these elders of the Judeans for the building of this house of God.* The elders, not the governor, are to receive

provisions. First Esdras 6:29, to the contrary, adds Zerubbabel's name here. On elders' significance as leaders in the Bible, see Brett 2019, 1–13.

And an order has been issued by me. The formulation turns what follows into an official decree. The translation here replicates the awkward Aramaic, a conventional way to declare "I make a decree" (so the NRSV). See, for example, Dan 3:29.

from the possessions of the king, of taxes from Across-the-River. Darius's support looks like a form of "tax rebate" for building the temple in Jerusalem. Extant records show that Darius selectively supported local temples and other projects throughout the empire. Udjahorresnet's inscription from the late sixth century BCE records how Cambyses agreed to support the restoration of the temple of the goddess Neith in Sais and to fund its upkeep (lines 1–3; for the Udjahorresnet Inscription, see Kuhrt 2007, 117–122, and Blenkinsopp 1987). However, unlimited subsidy challenges the present letter's reliability. In extrabiblical sources Darius's support of local shrines typically provides privileges, not financial expenditure. The Gadatas Inscription mentions Darius's intention to follow his predecessors (presumably Cyrus and/or Cambyses), who released that temple from tax obligations (see Bedford 2001, 148). It records Darius's displeasure that Apollo's temple is being taxed but does not indicate additional funding. Darius's provisions for the temple in Ezra 6 conform in principle to those of Cyrus's memorandum in Ezra 6:3–5 but exceed those of Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1:2–4).

be given to these men. Funds are for the workers engaged in the actual building (see "those men" in Notes at Ezra 4:21). First Esdras 6:29 drastically alters the message with "that is, Zerubbabel the governor."

6:9. *And whatever is needed.* Bedford (2001, 148) cogently concludes that the "claim in Ezr 6 to such generous beneficence is tendentious. At best it is an overstatement, perhaps made due to the writer's pro-Persian proclivity, or reflecting the myth of early Persian beneficence. Perhaps it is an outcome of simple cultic aggrandizement."

for burnt offerings to the God of heaven. This statement, and the long list of provisions for specific cult offerings that follows, resembles typical biblical sacrificial offerings (see Exod 29:1–2, 18, 38–40; Lev 2:13). Correspondence with biblical traditions thereby casts doubt on the instructions' origin in a royal source. The order of the provisions, Blenkinsopp (1988, 127) notes, is one favored by Ezra 6:17, 7:22, and 8:35, as well as Chronicles. The language for offerings in the memorandum from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.9.8–9 // Cowley 32) likewise resembles that of the Bible. Cultic specificity and details concerning the range of activities authorized by the royal court appear as well in the Aramaic "Passover papyrus" from Elephantine (see *TAD* A 4.1 // Cowley 21) but is not as extensive. This cultic terminology, pointing to a Judean hand, need not automatically discredit the main points of the account. However, the unlimited support undermines credibility (for a challenge to the authenticity of these details, see Grabbe 2006, 549–51). In any case, there is no ambiguity as to the temple's role: it is for sacrifices. Nothing ever suggests that it was a tax-collecting venue for the empire (contra Schaper 1997, 2000).

God of heaven. See Notes at Ezra 1:2.

in accordance with what the priests in Jerusalem say. While the elders bear responsibility for building, priests (not mentioned earlier in this correspondence) receive authority over cultic ritual and can determine need at their own discretion. Blenkinsopp

(1988, 127) concludes that this is a "free composition elaborated on the historical basis of a confirmation of the Cyrus rescript issued during the reign of Darius."

priests. Aramaic *kohănayyā',* is a cognate of the Hebrew *kōhănîm,* rather than the usual Aramaic term, *kamarayyā'*. The Elephantine documents also differentiate between Judean priests, *khny'* (*TAD* A 4.7.1 and 18 // Cowley 30), and Egyptian priests (*TAD* A 4.7.5 // Cowley 30). The Judean terminology contributes to doubt about authenticity.

6:10. *they will make offerings.* Aramaic *mĕhaqrĕbhîn,* from *q.r.b.,* "to bring near." Forms of *q.r.b.* in Hebrew relate to sacrifices (see Lev 1:2) in a more general fashion than *z.b.ḥ*. (used at Ezra 4:2).

of sweet savor to the God of heaven. The scent that accompanies sacrificial offerings (see, e.g., Lev 2:9).

and will pray for the life of the king and his sons. This is the first biblical example of including a foreign king's welfare in Jerusalem's cultic activities. Such practice, however, was widespread throughout the ANE. The Cyrus Cylinder specifies such petitions on behalf of the king (*ANET* 316). See also the papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.7, 30.25–26 // Cowley 30). Jeremiah 29:7 instructs the exiles to pray for Babylon's welfare. First Maccabees 7:37 mentions the practice in the Hellenistic era. But there is no reason to concur with Grätz (2006, 410–11) that this practice only emerged in that era.

6:11. *any person who will alter this message, a beam will be torn out of his house; and he will be lifted up and impaled upon it, and his house will be made into a dunghill.* In a manner typical of ANE commands, the letter concludes with penalties and curses.

impaled. Aramaic *zĕqîph.* Williamson (1985, 69) prefers "flogged." Impaling is a known Persian practice (see Herodotus, *Hist.* III.159, and the Behistun Inscription, par. 32, cited by Blenkinsopp 1988, 127).

his house will be made into a dunghill. The LXX has "his house shall be confiscated"; 1 Esd 6:32 has "his property shall be forfeited to the king." While "house" could refer to the broader term, household, destroying homes of offenders is a way to punish an entire family and also prevent resistance. Extending punishment to family or clan is common in ancient sources. The Udjahorresnet Inscription records King Cambyses' order regarding those who violate Egypt's temple that "all the houses be destroyed" (line 20; for this punishment in the Bible, see also Dan 2:5 and 3:29).

6:12. *And may the God who causes his name to dwell there.* God, not the king, is invoked as executor of punishment. God is depicted in distinctive terms rarely used outside Deuteronomy (see, e.g., Deut 26:2). This suggests a Judean hand. Nehemiah's prayer likewise includes this language in Hebrew (Neh 1:9).

overthrow any king or people who shall put forth a hand to alter or damage this house of God which is in Jerusalem. A concluding warning against desecration is a common feature of official records from the Persian period (see, e.g., Darius's Behistun Inscription, line 67).

I Darius have issued an order. Let it be done diligently. The emphasis on diligence recurs also in Ezra 5:8; 6:8, 12; and in King Artaxerxes' letter at Ezra 7:17, 21, 26).

Comments

Ezra 6:1–12 describes King Darius's firm commitment to support Jerusalem's temple. It also claims that the king transferred responsibility for temple management to the Judeans (Ezra 6:6–7). Darius commanded the Persian governor to stay away completely,

leaving the use of funding entirely in the hands of Jerusalem's cult personnel (6:9). One can conclude that Darius indeed supported the building project, but the form the support took and the reliability of the details in 6:1–12 remain uncertain and some also unlikely. Two issues dominate discussions of King Darius's letter (6:1–12): (1) the relation between Cyrus's memorandum in 6:3–5 and his decree in 1:2–4, and (2) the authenticity and origin of Darius's letter.

CYRUS'S MEMORANDUM

Cyrus's decree in Ezra 1:2–4 and the memorandum in 6:3–5 inevitably call for a comparison. Although they differ in genre (decree versus memorandum) and language (Hebrew in Ezra 1 versus Aramaic in Ezra 6), both claim to represent Cyrus's authorization. Both claim to be issued by Cyrus during his first year, authorize the building of the temple in Jerusalem, provide for funding, and largely conform to their genre: a royal proclamation in Ezra 1 comparable to that of the Cyrus Cylinder, and the memorandum in Ezra 6 comparable to those from Persepolis or Elephantine.

Differences reflect the different genre and purpose: a presumed public proclamation of a general policy in Ezra 1:1–4, and an internal administrative memorandum for fiscal accounting in Ezra 6 (Fleishman 1995). Ezra 1:1–4 proclaims a theological incentive for the work and emphasizes Jerusalem through repetition (Ezra 1:2, 3 [twice], and 4). It says nothing about the vessels (although their return is recorded in 1:7–11). The funding is from those who do not go to Jerusalem (1:4). Ezra 1 refers specifically to Israel's God, YHWH. Finally, Ezra 1 emphasizes not only the "where," but also the "who," namely, the people authorized to build: God's people (1:3). Ezra 6:3–5, on the other hand, emphasizes the "what," namely, material for building and the temple's cultic function. It says nothing about the "who." It provides royal funding and elaborates on the return of the vessels.

Most of the differences, then, flow from the different genres; but some do not. If (as is commonly assumed) the author of Ezra 1 had Ezra 6 available, its glaring omissions (especially of the vessels) carry special weight. Ezra 1 is theologically driven to set forward the book's overarching agenda in which rebuilding the temple is only one part. The memorandum reproduces a work permit (Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 54).

Although there is no general policy by Cyrus in support of destroyed temples (Bedford 2001, 151), extrabiblical evidence shows some specific stipulations by him and his successors for the upkeep or restoration of certain cults (ibid., 136–51). Since the temple was eventually built, and since it could not have been built without royal permission, some such authorization has to be assumed.

Grabbe (2006, 563) ranks the memorandum third in terms of authenticity in his analysis of the seven Aramaic documents in EN. He concludes that if the document is genuine at the core, "it was probably revised by a Jewish scribe" (ibid., 549): "the Persians might allow the temple of this local cult to be built, but the probability is small that the Persian government would pay for it" (ibid., 548). Furthermore, such a permit "would hardly be a matter with which the Persian king would concern himself" (ibid.).

Fried (2015a, 263–64) challenges Grabbe's last point, stating that he underestimates the extent to which the empire was micromanaged from the top. But one need not suppose micromanagement. Royally authorized documents were typically written, and often composed, by scribes (see Frei 1995, 2001) and sometimes signed by the

king's representatives. Signet rings were part of this practice. (In Esther, the king gives his ring to subordinates.) This process was not confined to antiquity and has its parallels in modern diplomatic circles. It obviates the need to suppose micromanagement or reject the memorandum for its royal attribution. Some other details, however, such as the seemingly unlimited funding, cannot be historically reliable.

Most scholars today tend to accept the reliability of Ezra 6:3–5. As Bedford (2001, 302) writes, "it is reasonable to argue that the temple rebuilding was sanctioned by the administration as the Aramaic version of the Cyrus decree (Ezra 6:2–5) and the Aramaic narrative of the temple building in Ezra (5–6) claim."

The Elephantine papyrus *TAD* A 4.9 (// Cowley 32) is particularly relevant to the memorandum in Ezra 6. It conveys royal authorization for restoring the temple of YHW in Elephantine and is cited here as translated and reproduced in Porten and Yardeni's version (*TAD* 1986, Vol. A, 76). Line 3, an insertion between the lines, is in smaller letters in their translation, as in the original. The full text is as follows:

1 Memorandum of what Bagohi and Delaiah said
2 to me, saying: Memorandum: you may say in Egypt
3 before Arsames about the Altar-house of the God of
4 Heaven which in Elephantine the fortress built
5 was formerly before Cambyses (and)
6 which that wicked Vidranga demolished
7 in year 14 of King Darius:
8 to (re)build it on its site as it was formerly
9 and they shall offer the meal-offering and the incense upon
10 that altar just as formerly
11 was done.

This memorandum responds to a conflict between Judeans and Egyptians in Elephantine. The Judeans' earlier letter to Bagohi, governor of Judah, requested his help in restoring their temple after the Egyptians destroyed it (*TAD* A 4.7, 4.8 // Cowley 30, 31). This is his response (with that of Delaiah, son of Samaria's governor).

Both Ezra 6:3–5 and Elephantine's *TAD* A 4.9 refer to sacrificial offerings in language familiar from Pentateuchal texts. But Elephantine's memorandum permits only meal-offering and incense. Ezra 6:3 sets no restrictions. Yet the form, tone, and even content of the Elephantine memorandum and 6:3–5 show that 6:3–5 conforms to fifth-century BCE scribal practices in Persian-period administration.

Although circumstances in Judah and Elephantine differ, the conflict in Elephantine between Judeans and Egyptians exemplifies local squabbles among groups within the Persian Empire. Ezra 4–6 reflects some similar local skirmishes, fought via documents.

The Elephantine memorandum illustrates how closely Ezra 6:3–5 resembles a genuine Persian-period memorandum. The stipulations about funding in 6:3–5, however, suggest that a Judean author embellished what may be an authentic memorandum (for the range of opinions and other details, see Bedford 2001 and the discussion in "Cyrus's Decree" in the Comments at Ezra 1:1–4). As to the dimensions of the temple in Cyrus's memorandum (6:3), no convincing explanation has emerged thus far.

Ezra 6:6–12, like the other royal letters, raises questions about historicity and reliability. No doubt King Darius had to approve the building of the temple, but his generous provisions in the letter challenge credibility. Grabbe (2006, 549–51), who identifies early and late linguistic features, lists the letter fourth in his relative ranking of the seven Aramaic documents in terms of their authenticity. Several details suggest Judean hands: the precision regarding the cult (Ezra 6:9), the Deuteronomistic reference to God's dwelling place (6:12), and, especially, the absence of limits on royal provisions. Grabbe represents a widely held conclusion when he cautiously accepts some degree of authenticity but concludes that if there was an original document, it was thoroughly reworded by Judean hands (ibid., 551).

3. RESULTS: THE TEMPLE AND ITS CULT ARE FULLY RESTORED (6:13–18)

6 [13]Then Tattenai the governor of Across-the-River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates, according to that which Darius the king sent, so they did diligently. [14]And the elders of the Judeans were building and succeeding through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah son of Iddo, and they built and finished according to the order of the God of Israel and the order of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. [15]And this house was completed by the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

[16]And the sons of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the sons of exile, made the dedication of this house with gladness. [17]And they sacrificed for the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and male goats for the purification offering for all Israel: twelve for the number of the tribes of Israel. [18]And they appointed the priests according to their sections and Levites according to their divisions for the service of the God who is in Jerusalem in accordance with the writing of the book of Moses.

Introduction and Structure

Darius's orders lead, finally, to the completion of the temple in 516/515 BCE (Ezra 6:15). The Aramaic section concludes with the temple standing and its cult personnel duly appointed in accordance with the book of Moses (6:18).

Surprisingly, the festivities at the temple's dedication are recounted only briefly. Although numerous animals are sacrificed (Ezra 6:17), the report lacks the fanfare that accompanies the founding of the temple in Ezra 3 and the celebrations in Nehemiah 8–12, contributing to the view that the temple in EN is but one stage in building YHWH's house. Of special interest is the correct order of the Persian kings (6:14), which contrasts with the sequence in Ezra 4–5.

The structure of Ezra 6:13–18 is as follows:

1. The completion of the temple in 516/515 BCE (6:13–15)
2. The dedication of the temple (6:16–18)

Notes

6:13. *Then Tattenai the governor . . . according to that which Darius the king sent, so they did diligently.* Speedy implementation of the royal letter had stopped work on the temple in Ezra 4:23; now, conversely, it supports the work. First Esdras 7:2 adds that the Persian officials "supervised the holy work with great care, assisting the elders of the Jews and the chief officers of the temple" (see also Josephus, *Ant.* XI.iv.7 // XI.105). In EN, however, Persian officials must let the Judeans control their activities, without Persian intrusion (Ezra 6:6–7).

6:14. *And the elders of the Judeans were building.* At the end, only the elders receive credit for building the temple, with the two prophets as motivators. The silence about Zerubbabel or Jeshua is striking but consistent with EN's overall "democratizing" tendency (with Japhet 1982, 1983a; *pace* Fried 2015a, 279). The LXX surprisingly mentions Levites.

succeeding through the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah. The final stage of the building began with these two prophets (Ezra 5:1) and concludes with them. EN ignores Zech 4:9, which anticipates that Zerubbabel will complete the temple.

The reference to the prophets reiterates the role of a divine mandate (Blenkinsopp 1988, 129). With this, the prophets' work is finished. Prophets in the rest of EN (see, e.g., Neh 6:14) no longer speak for God. Authority is transferred to the *torah.* The rabbinic claim that prophecy ended with Malachi (Tosefta Sotah 9.2) reflects a perspective already implicit in EN. First Esdras 7:3 has "the holy work prospered while the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied."

they built and finished according to the order of the God of Israel and the order of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. The conclusion emphasizes that everything was done in full compliance with divine and royal order and that the two harmoniously concur.

finished according to the order of the God of Israel and the order of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. The Aramaic term "order" here is virtually the same for God and kings, but with a slight difference. The consonants are the same, but the reference to God has *ṭaʿam,* and the reference to kings has *ṭĕʿēm.* The LXX is identical for both. Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 69) suggests that the Masoretes sought to differentiate between the "holy" and the "profane." While many translations use the same noun for both parties (Koren Jerusalem Bible translation, Blenkinsopp 1988, Fried 2015a, and here), 1 Esd 7:4 and some modern translations (NJPS, NRSV, New American Bible, Williamson 1985) differentiate between them. The NJPS uses "aegis" and "order," and the NRSV has "command" and "decree," respectively. First Esdras 7:4 has "they completed it by the command of the Lord God of Israel. So with the consent of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of the Persians."

God of Israel. This underscores the Judean hand at work. Compare Ezra 5:1.

Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Three Persian kings receive credit for authorizing the completion of the temple. Their correct order here confirms that EN's editor knew the sequence of these kings. One has to conclude that the anachronistic placing of the Artaxerxes correspondence in Ezra 4 does not result from ignorance. Since Artaxerxes had not (as yet) offered support for the temple (but will in Ezra 7), the sentence is best read as a proleptic summary. First Esdras includes these three kings here; Josephus omits Artaxerxes.

Fried (2015a, 280) notes that "consistent with ancient Near Eastern temple building inscriptions, the reigning monarchs under whose reign the temple was completed are mentioned." However, extant ANE building inscriptions feature the king as the builder of the temple; EN focuses on the community, here specifically the elders. On the kings, see "The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE)" in the Introduction.

Artaxerxes. Of the four Persian kings named Artaxerxes, the most likely reference here and in Ezra 4 is to Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE). The mention of Artaxerxes, whose support will be delineated in the coming chapters (but not for temple construction), coupled with the relatively understated temple dedication implies that the reconstruction is only partially accomplished. Full realization will take place under Artaxerxes, with his support of Ezra (Ezra 7–10) and Nehemiah (Neh 1–7). See further Notes at Ezra 4:7 and 7:1.

6:15. *And this house was completed by the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.* Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 59) calculates that the temple was completed on March 12, 515 BCE (also Blenkinsopp 1988, 129). This date comports with dates in Haggai and Zechariah, whose latest dates are the second and fourth years of Darius (Hag 2:20 and Zech 7:1), corresponding to 520 and 518 BCE. Fried (2015a), who follows 1 Esdras, dates it in 516 BCE. Scholars note that completion some seventy-one or seventy-two years after the destruction of Solomon's temple evokes the promised seventy years in Jer 25:11–12 and 29:10 (see, e.g., Williamson 1985, 84). The reference to Jeremiah in Ezra 1:1 contributes to such calculations. Yet in EN, the temple's dedication, far from appearing as the pivotal event in Israel's history, is quickly upstaged by Passover and the Festival of the Unleavened Bread (Ezra 6:19–22).

the third day of the month of Adar. Several scholars prefer the twenty-third of Adar, the date in 1 Esd 7:5 (followed by Josephus), because it is more understandable that a number would fall off than that it would be added (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 129, and Williamson 1985, 72 n. 15c). The LXX, however, follows the MT. The proximity to Passover with the twenty-third seems attractive to Blenkinsopp and Fried (2015a, 281–82). Fried concludes that the date had to be Sunday, April 11, in 516 BCE because the twenty-third of Adar in 515 BCE would have fallen on the Sabbath. These complex calculations are based on emending the MT and LXX.

Adar. The twelfth month in the biblical calendar, mentioned in the Bible again only in Esther. EN alternates using months' names and months' numbers (e.g., the fifth month in Ezra 7:8). The switch between the two systems seems deliberate. The numbers of the months are the preferred for cultic references (see Ezra 6:19).

the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. Depending on which counting system Ezra 6 supposes, the date could be 516 BCE (e.g., Fried 2015a, 281) or 515 BCE (Noth 1960, 306–15; Williamson 1985, 84; Bedford 2001, 301–10; and most commentators). In this account, building the temple took about four years.

There are different systems in ANE sources for counting regnal years. In some, the king's ascension to the throne begins a new year. In others, the established calendar defines how the counting is reckoned. Fried (2015, 282) concludes that EN follows Persian counting, where years were counted beginning with spring. Becking (2018, 91), and Dequeker (1993, 68) think the reference is to Darius II (424–404 BCE), but this

conclusion has not gained support. Josephus dates the completion to the ninth year of Darius, specifying that it took seven years to build the temple (*Ant.* XI.iv.7 // XI.107).

6:16. *And the sons of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the sons of exile, made the dedication of this house with gladness.* This phrasing could be read in two ways: Israel is now composed (1) of the three groups (priests, Levites, and exiles) or (2) of four (Israel, priests, Levites, and exiles). The first interpretation views the statement as "exclusive," defining only the three following groups as legitimate Israel. Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 59), however, suggests that the specification expresses the conviction that the temple serves the entire people Israel, not only the residents of Judah. At stake is determining whether EN is excluding those who did not share the exilic experience or is trying to demonstrate that the exiles also are Israel. Ezra 6:21 suggests an exclusive interpretation for this section since others join the returnees only then. In either case, the exiles' role is highlighted. The Israel-centered terminology points to a different hand from what preceded, as do the distinctively Judean designations for people and cultic practices.

While still mostly in Aramaic, the terminology includes forms of Hebrew terms. "Israel" replaces "Judeans," *yĕhûdāyē;* the mention of priests, Levites, and exiles discloses a Judean reckoning. The change may simply reflect a later editorial hand, but it also may seek to emphasize the distinctly Judean nature of the community.

Josephus highlights the significance of the event: "the priests and Levites and the rest of the Israelite people brought sacrifices to celebrate the renewal of their former prosperity after their captivity and in token of having a sanctuary once more" (*Ant.* XI.iv.7 // XI.107).

sons of Israel. Presumably the Israelites, that is, an inclusive sense for the people Israel. On "sons," see Notes at Ezra 2:1.

priests. Aramaic *kohănayyā',* uniquely designates Judean priests, both in the Bible and in Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30). See also Artaxerxes' later letter (Ezra 7:12–26; e.g., Ezra 7:13).

sons of exile. The reference is inclusive, with "sons" meaning the exiles in general. On "sons," see Notes at Ezra 2:1.

exile. Aramaic *gālûtā'*. This term in Aramaic appears only here in EN and three times in Daniel (always there as "sons of the exile from *yĕhûd,*" that is, those now in the *gôlâ:* Dan 2:25, 5:13, 6:14). The Hebrew, *gālût,* also "exile," is common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (e.g., Jer 52:31, Ezek 1:2). EN typically uses *gôlâ* to designate the place of exile or the exiles themselves (twelve times in Ezra 1–10 and once in Neh 7:6, a repetition of Ezra 2:1). The reference to exile at this juncture underscores the central role of returnees in building the temple. Josephus highlights the return: they "brought sacrifices to celebrate the renewal of their former prosperity after their captivity and in token of having a sanctuary once more" (*Ant.* XI.iv.7 // XI.107).

made. Aramaic *'ăbhadû,* cognate of Hebrew "to serve" or "to worship."

with gladness. The word *ḥedwâ* (only here in the Aramaic section but in Hebrew in Neh 8:10 and 1 Chr 16:27) pertains to joy connected with ritual. First Esdras 7:6 omits "gladness" but includes "according to what was written in the book of Moses," which in the MT ends this account in Ezra 6:18.

6:17. *And they sacrificed for the dedication of this house of God one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and male goats for the purification offering for all*

Israel: twelve for the number of the tribes of Israel. Fried's (2015a, 277) translation, "and as a purification offerings for all Israel, 12 male goats," while modifying the syntax of the MT, helpfully clarifies details: only the twelve goats are purification offerings.

The scene is primarily one of a large festive meal, a communal barbecue. In Lev 17:3–4, all animals to be consumed must first be brought to the sanctuary (see Deut 15:19–23 on eating meat that is dedicated but not sacrificed). The community now eats what they first offer. The number of animals exceeds those offered upon Ezra's arrival (Ezra 8:35) but pales in comparison with those at the dedication of Solomon's temple (22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep in 1 Kgs 8:63 // 2 Chr 7:5). The offerings at the dedication of Solomon's temple are "sacrifices" (the technical term *zebaḥ*) and *šĕlāmîm* (well-being or peace offerings) (1 Kgs 8:62–63). No specific offering is named here (except for the goats). The food is for the community.

one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and male goats. The same animals will be offered in Ezra 8:35. Funding for these animals has been authorized by King Darius (Ezra 6:9). Relevant in this connection is Nehemiah's mention that he provided daily one ox and six sheep for his more than 150 guests (see Neh 5:17–18). The implicit number of people fed at the present dedication is obviously very large. Given the quantities that feed 150 in Neh 5:17–18, the offerings here could feed more than 45,000 people.

purification offering. Aramaic *ḥaṭṭāyâ* (K), *ḥaṭṭā'â* (Q). The term is a cognate of the Hebrew *ḥaṭṭā't,* the purification offering, commonly labeled "sin offering." This sacrifice aims to remove cultic impurities. Milgrom's (1991, 253–92) careful analysis illustrates that the offering does not purify the person bringing it but rather the sanctuary and its sancta. Such a ritual is especially pertinent when the rebuilt temple is dedicated. Yet this cultic offering is the only act mentioned that shows concern with purity. This contrasts with the lengthy ceremonies for purifying the altar and tabernacle in Exodus and Leviticus (see also the envisioned purification of the high priest in Zech 3:1–10). Ezra 6 is mostly silent about these matters (for rules concerning purification or sin offerings, see, e.g., Lev 4 and Num 15:24. On purifying sacred space and cult personnel, see Exod 40:9–15; Lev 8, 16; and Milgrom 1991, 253–64).

for all Israel: twelve for the number of the tribes of Israel. The purification offering symbolically represents the entire preexilic nation, including the Northern Kingdom of Israel, now Samaria. The number also expresses an awareness that the temple is for "all Israel," not merely the residents of Judah (Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 60 [Kochman]).

the tribes of Israel. This is the only explicit mention of "tribes" in EN. The reference implies continuity with the early periods of Israel's history. Ezra's entourage likewise offers twelve male goats for a purification offering on behalf of Israel (Ezra 8:35).

6:18. *they appointed the priests according to their sections and Levites according to their divisions.* Blenkinsopp (1988, 128) omits "the priests," in accordance with 1 Esd 7:11 and because Ezra 6:20 suggests to him that only Levites are meant. First Esdras 7:9 has as its conclusion, "and the priests and the Levites stood arrayed in their vestments, according to kindred, for the services of the Lord God and the gatekeepers were at each gate." Josephus elaborates, adding that the "priests and Levites set porters at each gateway because the Jews had built porticoes round the temple within the sacred precincts" (*Ant.* XI.iv.7 // XI.108). These details are among the very few that record traditions about the second temple before King Herod replaced it.

the service of the God who is in Jerusalem. At the conclusion of this section, Jerusalem comes back to the fore as God's abode, this time linked directly with the book of Moses (below), even though Jerusalem is not explicitly named in the Pentateuch.

in accordance with the writing of the book of Moses. The entire Aramaic section that began in Ezra 4:8, leading to the completion of the temple, ends with the book of Moses. With this book of Moses as the final word, the temple-centered community has restored its destiny and reclaimed its identity as a united Israel oriented to its own tradition. This is the third time in EN that such written Judean tradition determines cultic activities (see Ezra 3:2 and 3:4). The founding of the temple began with Moses's written teachings. It concludes in the same way.

book of Moses. What the book contains remains subject to scholarly debate, although most likely it includes Deuteronomy. EN clearly implies that this book is the same *torah* of Moses as in Ezra 3:2 (in agreement with Williamson 1985, 84, and contra Houtman 1981, who uses this verse to differentiate between the *torah* and the Mosaic book).

The references to the book of Moses link the restored temple to a time before Solomon's temple, even though that book does not mention a temple but only a tabernacle. The new temple, then, is not a restoration of Solomon's temple. Instead, it is a symbolic reconstitution of the tabernacle, in continuity with Israel of the exodus.

As also at Ezra 3:2, the reference to the book of Moses does not point to a specific verse. Rather, such terminology affirms the application, as well as the interpretation, of the authoritative source to present (and changed) circumstances (Fishbane 1988, e.g., 137–38, and Edenburg 2019; see also "as is written" in Notes at Ezra 3:2).

Comments

Ezra 6:13–18 concludes the Aramaic section (which began in Ezra 4:8) by recording (still in Aramaic but with some Hebrew) that the orders of Darius were executed diligently. The book of Moses (6:18) bestows Judean legitimacy on the cult. It harks back to the written *torah* of Moses at the beginning of the building activity (3:2), making Moses the framing figure for the restoration of the temple and Stage One of the reconstruction (Ezra 3–6). Whatever roles Persian monarchs played, their authority is now subordinated to that of Moses. Furthermore, messages that pertain to the tabernacle are now applied to Jerusalem's temple and cult.

Ezra 6:13–18 does not linger on the festivities associated with the dedication beyond listing enormous quantities of sacrificial offerings (shared presumably by all participants). Possibly, the authors did not have much information. But whatever the historical backdrop, this truncated description in EN casts the completion of the temple as but the first stage within a larger story. It is followed by two others stages (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 1–7), after which the elaborate dedication of the house of YHWH takes place, encompassing Jerusalem as a whole, not only the temple (Neh 8–12).

The temple's dedication in Ezra 6:13–18 contrasts sharply with temple dedication elsewhere in the Bible, as well as with accounts about the tabernacle. Nothing is said about the building itself or its furnishings, nor do we witness the grand festivities that occupy much of 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 5–7, where Solomon's temple is dedicated. EN's modest depictions suggest that the temple was not the final goal.

Content and terminology point to a Judean author: the reference to the people as "Israel" replaces earlier Aramaic references to the people as *yĕhûdāyê'* (e.g., Ezra 6:7–8, 14) and includes EN's distinct categories (priests, Levites, and exiles). This changed terminology suggests a symbolic transformation: with a temple dedicated and the cult established, the community's identity changes. It now reflects the twelve tribes of Israel.

Fried (2015a, 277), for whom Ezra 1–6 represents a building inscription, calls attention (ibid., 284–87) to the puzzling silence about the temple vessels. In EN, the vessels function like the images of the gods in the ANE. Depositing them in the temple would signal the return of the god to the temple. She proposes that God is brought into the temple only with the dedication of the city (ibid., 284–85). The *torah* replaces the vessels as a symbol of God (Tigay 2013). In EN, the entire city and its people constitute God's dwelling place (Eskenazi 1988a), which is why God's presence enters only later, in Nehemiah 8–13. Importantly, in contrast to all other temple-building accounts in the Bible and the ANE, the people, not kings, build the temple. No individual leaders appear at the conclusion.

Ezra 6:13–18 disassociates the cult from Persian or royal influences. Its function (for EN) is solely "religious," as Bedford (2007) also illustrates, even though as the major Judean institution it had an economic impact (but not, as Schaper [1997, 2000] claims, as an imperial tax-collecting venue).

No concrete information remains about the temple's building and furnishings, although it stood longer than Solomon's temple. Biblical sources concur that it was small and unimpressive at the beginning (Hag 2:3, Ezra 3:12). Nehemiah 13:7–9 indicates that it had courtyards and chambers, but no textual or material evidence from it remains. The description of Elephantine's Judean temple (*TAD* A 4.7) sheds potential light, with references to stone pillars, wooden panels, and some accoutrements such as gold and silver basins, bronze hinges, and a cedarwood roof (lines 10–12). One can expect the same for Jerusalem's temple at some point. King Herod's so-called renovations, however, replaced the entire building and its foundations. His own monumental structure glorified his reign, while retaining the claim of continuity (Josephus, *Ant.* XV.xi.1–6). EN concentrates on the processes leading to the building and on the builders, perhaps because descriptions of the temple would have been unnecessary for its readers when the temple still stood, or because of EN's larger agenda. For EN, from the beginning to the end, the temple and its cult conform to Moses's instructions (Ezra 3:2 and 6:18; for an attempt to combine disjointed sources to gain additional concrete information, see Edelman 2012a).

D. Celebrating the Conclusion of Stage One: Passover/Festival of the Unleavened Bread (6:19–22)

6 [19]And the sons of exile made the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month. [20]For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves as one, all of them pure, and they slaughtered the Passover for all the sons of exile and for their brothers the priests and for themselves. [21]And the sons of Israel ate, the ones returning from exile and all those who separated to them from the pollution of the nations of the land to seek YHWH the God of Israel. [22]And they made the Festival of the Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for

YHWH made them joyful and turned the heart of the king of Assyria concerning them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Introduction

Passover completes the story of the temple's and cult's restoration, rendering the preceding events analogous to the exodus from Egypt. The narrative reverts to Hebrew to record this concluding event. Passover and the shift in language express the transformation that has taken place: Passover at the temple in Jerusalem signals liberation from slavery and the resumption of life in the land. The concluding verses (Ezra 6:21–22) widen the circle of participants beyond the returning exiles.

Notes

6:19. *And the sons of exile made the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month.* Significantly, no leader orchestrates the celebration, in contrast to other celebrations in the Bible. The expression "sons of exile" first appeared in Ezra 4:1, when building the temple actually began. Fried (2015a, 277) translates this phrase as "returnees," which may obscure the intention of recalling exile in order to reverse it, linking exile with slavery in Egypt. Passover's celebration comes some forty-one days after the third of Adar, when the temple and cult were fully restored (Ezra 6:15).

The symbolic power of Passover as liberation from slavery is particularly relevant here. Passover also marks key transitions in biblical narratives beyond the exodus itself. Josiah celebrates Passover grandly in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 23, 2 Chr 34), and in 2 Chronicles 30, so does Hezekiah.

exile. Heb. *gôlâ.* The term can designate the exiled community or a place of exile. It is used, especially in Ezra 7–10, to define or describe the people who constitute the community. Here it refers to the first generation of returning exiles.

Passover. Passover is the major holy day, named after God's protective "passing over" (*pāsaḥ*) the Israelites when smiting the Egyptians (Exod 12:27). Passover laws appear in Exod 12:1–13:16, Lev 23:5, Num 28:16, and Deut 16:1–2. "Passover" technically designates the lamb offering for this occasion. Instructions for it begin already in Egypt. Exodus 12:43–49 forbids foreigners to partake of the Passover offering but permits it to circumcised slaves and resident aliens (Heb. *gēr,* a group EN never mentions).

Deuteronomy 16:1–8 modifies the messages. Whereas Exodus 12–13 defines Passover as a household ritual, Deuteronomy restricts the offering exclusively to the one place chosen by God, presumably Jerusalem (Deut 16:6; Mount Gerizim for the Samaritans). Josiah's Passover establishes this practice (2 Kgs 23, 2 Chr 35). Second Chronicles 30 retrojects it also to the earlier time of Hezekiah. Ezra 6:19–22, with its emphasis on the specialized roles of cult personnel, reinforces the tradition of Passover as a national, temple-centered event.

The so-called Passover papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.1 // Cowley 21), dated 419 BCE, confirms that the date and the basic biblical practices were in place by the late fifth century BCE. Additionally, two ostraca mention the *psḥ* in passing (*TAD* D 7.6.9–10 and *TAD* D 7.24–25).

first month. Nisan, usually in April. Note the return to numbers for months, rather than Babylonian names (e.g., Adar in Ezra 6:15).

6:20. *For the priests and the Levites.* In EN, Levites are usually on par with the priests, highlighted in the work of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 8:1–19, 24–29; Neh 13:10–13; note as well the special emphasis on Levites in Ezra 3). Chronicles mentions the Levites in both Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chr 30:15–16) and Josiah's (2 Chr 35:6–14). In 2 Chr 30:16–17 (cf. 2 Chr 29:34) Levites provide a (temporary?) remedy for some earlier priestly negligence. In Ezra 6:20, however, Levites may have the greater role (see below).

The celebration in Ezra 6:19–22 is "liturgical and centralized, . . . rather than the more family-oriented celebration in Exodus 12" (Laird 2016, 178), signaling that priests are "necessary for this formative ritual" (171). Laird concludes that "even though the text asserts the community's role in setting apart the priests, it also underscores the division between priests and laity and extends the distance between them" (ibid.). Blenkinsopp (1988, 131), following 1 Esd 7:11, omits "priests."

had purified themselves as one, all of them pure. While Exodus is silent about purification, Num 9:6–13 states that those who are impure may not participate in the Passover. First Esdras 7:11, which omits the priests, elaborates: "Not all of the returned captives were purified, but the Levites were all purified together." The Levites then offer sacrifices on behalf of the priests as well (1 Esd 7:12).

purified themselves. Purification means making oneself fit for cultic service by removing impurities before approaching the holy (somewhat as surgeons do when preparing to operate). The primarily physical preparation may account for the common translation of the verb as "cleanse" in Leviticus, where it most often appears (see the NRSV and NJPS for Lev 16:19). Numbers 8:7 describes the purification of the Levites: "Thus you shall do to them, to purify them: sprinkle the water of purification on them, have them shave their whole body with a razor and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves." In the handling of sacrificial offerings, in this case meat to be consumed by everyone, commonsense hygienic considerations should not be discounted. Scholars debate the extent to which purity has moral implications in biblical texts, especially in EN (see Comments [9:1–15]).

EN does not mention purification when the temple was dedicated, but first at Passover (and later at the dedication of the wall in Neh 12:30, when the people are also purified). Hezekiah's and Josiah's Passovers in Chronicles include sanctification of the cult personnel in some detail (2 Chr 30, 35); purification for Passover applies to the people as a whole (2 Chr 30:18). The so-called Passover papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.1.6 // Cowley 21) also mandates purification.

and they slaughtered the Passover. Exodus 12 implies that each household undertook to make the *pesaḥ* offering itself. But other laws grant priests special roles in sacrificial matters (e.g., Lev 1–7). Only EN and Chronicles assign sacrificial responsibilities to Levites as well.

the sons of exile. The exilic status, which parallels that of liberated slaves from Egypt in the first Passover, fittingly comes to the fore again. The reference is to the exiles as a whole. See Notes at Ezra 6:16.

and for their brothers the priests and for themselves. As things stand, the subject of this phrase appears to be the Levites whom EN consistently includes at key moments. The Levitical presence is so pervasive that some credit the book as a whole to Levitical authorship (see, e.g., Min 2004). Here their role seems to surpass that of the priests

(so too in 1 Esd 7:12, which specifies that the Levites then offer sacrifices on behalf of the priests).

6:21. *And the sons of Israel ate, the ones returning from exile and all those who separated to them from the pollution of the nations of the land to seek YHWH the God of Israel.* The united people Israel celebrate and partake of the Passover offering. Returning exiles and those who likewise dedicate themselves to Israel's God jointly celebrate. Ezra 6:21 indicates that once a distinctly Judean temple was restored in Jerusalem (and the location is important), different criteria for participation could be delineated. This verse is crucial for understanding the conflict with outsiders and the "people(s) in the land(s)" that occupies such a prominent place in EN (see Ezra 9–10).

sons of Israel. Israel is now represented by the returning exiles and those who join them. A new criterion for membership enters the picture. History alone (the *gôlâ* experience) no longer determines membership; certain commitments must be made as well. Kinship is very likely presumed yet insufficient. The reestablished temple helps identify communal orientation and definable boundaries. This section is usually ascribed to the final editorial hand of EN; its criteria for inclusion resemble those in Neh 10:29 [ET 28], where separation is the basic condition espoused by the signatories of the pledge (see the Comments below).

returning from exile and all those who separated. Bedford (2001, 304) argues that the initial purpose of the temple was to unite various groups. He considers social integration rather than social division the goal of the historical moment. In EN's account, however, such integration is coupled with separation.

Who are those who had separated themselves? In 1 Esd 7:13, they are the exiles. In Ezra 6:21, they are a different group. Pseudo Rashi considers those who separated proselytes (so too Williamson 1985, 85); the possibility that conversion is implied was raised by Japhet (1983b, 117) as well. This conclusion is not necessary. The reference can apply naturally to Judeans and Israelites who threw in their lot with the returnees (see the Comments below).

and. The LXX, like the MT, uses the conjunction *waw. BHS* suggests omitting it, but it should be preserved, as in the KJV, NJPS, and NRSV (see Wills 2008; Eskenazi 2014a; Jones 2015). First Esdras 7:13 omits it, making "those who separated" identical with those who returned, thereby excluding those already in the land. Yet 1 Esd 5:50a, in its parallel to Ezra 3:3, describes a similar inclusion: "Some joined them from the other peoples of the land," even though 1 Esd 5:50b also records enmity.

separated. Separation both "from" and "to" stands out as a new criterion for membership at this point in EN; certain relations are deemed polluting and an obstacle to genuine devotion to Israel's God. Scholars regard the language of separation as primarily priestly. In defining a boundary, the term goes back to Genesis 1 (see, e.g., Gen 1:4, 6, 7). Elsewhere in the Bible, separation is often a ritual category connected to sanctity. In Ezra 9:1–2, not separating from the peoples of the lands leads to the crisis that Ezra seeks to resolve. The verb is more common in EN than in any other biblical book. In this grammatical form (*niphal*) it appears once in Num 16:21, twice in Chronicles, and eight times in EN (Ezra 6:21; 9:1; 10:8, 11, 16; Neh 9:2, 10:29, 13:3). In all cases in EN, separation is of people and from people and is part and parcel of dedication to a special task, in this case, seeking God.

Harrington (2008, 112–16) overlooks the full range of separation in her discussion of purity terms in EN (see further at Ezra 9:1). EN is more nuanced than she notes. Douglas (2002) likewise seems to have glossed over the diverse senses of separation in EN.

Opposition to certain marriages in Ezra 9–10 hangs on the fact that some did not separate themselves from people whose practices were like those of the Canaanites. In Ezra 6:21, separation addresses the problem of maintaining cultic purity as well as devotion to a particular God and tradition (on "separate," see further Notes at Ezra 8:24 and 9:1, and the Comments at Ezra 9).

from the pollution of the nations of the land. The polluting aspects of the people of Canaan in Leviticus result from behavioral practices, not ethnic characteristics (see, e.g., Lev 20:23–26).

pollution. Heb. *ṭum'â,* a term common in Leviticus (eighteen times), used twice in EN: here and Ezra 9:11, where it applies to the peoples of the lands. It usually refers in Leviticus to impurities generated by illness and contact with genital emissions or with the dead. As Milgrom (1991, 261) and Douglas (2000) explain, impurity did not inhere in nature but was generated by human action (see also Olyan 2004). It could be ritually removed (see Lev 15).

the nations of the land. This expression differs from reference to the objectionable "people(s) of the land(s)" in Ezra 4 (e.g., 4:4) and Ezra 9 (e.g., 9:1). It refers most likely to foreigners.

to seek YHWH the God of Israel. Those who seek YHWH likely include Judeans and Israelites in the land who did not participate in building the temple but now may join the community. In 2 Chr 30:18–19 this expression describes Israelites from the former Northern Kingdom who join Hezekiah's Passover. Inclusion in Ezra 6:21 "illustrates the openness of the postexilic Jewish community to outsiders who wished to become insiders" (Blenkinsopp 1988, 133). It contrasts with attitudes elsewhere in EN. One can suppose a gradual narrowing of the boundary or, conversely (if this phrase reflects the final editor of EN), a broadening after a clearer definition in Ezra 9–10.

6:22. *And they made the Festival of the Unleavened Bread seven days.* The Passover falls on the fourteenth of the first month, and the eating of the unleavened bread, the matzah, follows directly, until the twenty-first of the month (Exod 12:18). There is some inconsistency in that in Exodus 12, the seven days begin on the eve of the fourteenth, whereas elsewhere they begin on the fifteenth (Lev 23:6).

The unleavened bread, like the Passover lamb, symbolizes the exodus from Egypt. Unleavened bread commemorates the Israelites' haste—not having enough time to bake bread properly before leaving. Exodus 12:8–20 mandates a seven-day festival when *maṣṣôt* are to be eaten and no leaven is permitted.

Passover and the Festival of the Unleavened Bread always appear together in the Pentateuchal laws and in most recorded celebrations (Josh 5:9–11; 2 Chr 30, 35). Biblical sources consistently keep them distinct. Scholars generally suppose that two different groups in Israel—pastoral and agricultural—stand behind the two celebrations. On the fusion of the two, see Satlow 2014; and Levinson 1997, 53–97.

YHWH . . . turned the heart of the king of Assyria concerning them, to strengthen their hands. Cyrus and his successors ruled Assyria, now part of the Persian Empire.

Some ancient Persian sources present them as immediate successors of the Assyrians (see Kuhrt 1982). The reference, then, to the king of Assyria is technically correct; but this does not explain why, of all royal titles, Assyria would be used at this point.

Assyria may allude to the exile of the Northern Kingdom. If so, reconstruction in Judah reverses that exile as well so that Judah continues what is left of that previous Israel. This may be a polemic against other claimants, such as Samaria, or, conversely, a symbol of some reunification. The offering of twelve goats on behalf of "all Israel" also expresses this idea (see also Ezra 8:35). Blenkinsopp (1988, 133), who holds that EN comes from the same hand as Chronicles, suggests a connection with 2 Chr 30:6, which refers to Israelites who escaped from the hand of Assyria. In any case, foreign kings in EN, beginning in Ezra 1:1 and concluding here, ultimately respond to Israel's God.

to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel. The LXX condenses to "work on the house of the God of Israel." This verse concludes Stage One of the reconstruction. It underscores the work of the people's own hands under royal patronage.

to strengthen. This verb in the *piel* as here refers to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus, constituting there the most concentrated use of the verb in this form in the Pentateuch (thirteen times; see, e.g., Exod 14:8).

God of Israel. This designation, frequent in Ezra 1–10, carries a polemical message. It establishes the God of Israel in Jerusalem, presumably in opposition to other sanctuaries such as in Samaria (see Stahl 2020, 2021).

Comments

The restoration of the temple and the cult culminates with the Passover and the Festival of the Unleavened Bread, Israel's foundational traditions. These events take slightly more "narrative space" than the temple's dedication. In recording the event, the narrative reverts from Aramaic back to Hebrew. The linguistic shift and the emphasis on Passover express a reorientation and reentry into distinct Judean history while under imperial rule.

EN's Passover overshadows the temple's dedication by including purifications one would have expected earlier. It thereby also suggests the temple is not a "grand finale" but rather one important step in the gradual, multi-stage process of rebuilding.

Israel celebrates the Passover in Joshua 5 when it first crosses over into the land (after removing the "disgrace" of Egypt; see Josh 5:9–11); Passover signals their having arrived finally in the promised land. EN's emphasis on the exiles in this section (Ezra 6:21) echoes that sentiment as well.

King Josiah's Passover in 2 Kings follows the reforms instituted by the discovery of the book of the *torah* (2 Kgs 23:21–24), completing Josiah's reforms. The addition of an earlier Passover of Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 30 illustrates postexilic attention to Passover as a unifying religious and cultural force. Both accounts mention also the Festival of the Unleavened Bread (2 Kgs 23 does not). EN contrasts with these earlier Passover celebrations by depicting the community as a whole, not kings, as initiators.

Two ostraca from Elephantine mention Passover, the *psḥ',* briefly (*TAD* D 7.6.9–10 and *TAD* D 7.24–25). The so-called Passover papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.1 // Cowley 21), dated 419 BCE, offers extrabiblical evidence for the date and basic biblical practices of the two celebrations in the late fifth century. Here is the relevant section:

Recto:
[. . .] Now, you thus count four[teen days in Nisan and on the 14th at twilight ob]serve [the Passover] and from the 15th day until the 21st day of [Nisan observe the Festival of the unleavened bread. Seven days eat unleavened bread. Now] be pure and take heed. [Do] n[ot do] any work [on the 15th day and on the 21st day of Nisan.] Do not drink [any fermented drink. And do] not [eat] anything of leaven
Verso:
[nor let it be seen in your houses from the 14th day of Nisan at] sunset until the 21st day of Nisa[n at sunset. And b]ring into your chambers [any leaven which you have in your houses] and seal (them) up during [these] days.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–50 CE) describes Passover as a "universal sacrifice of the whole people" on the fourteenth (*Spec. Laws* 2, 27.149) and then adds, "And there is another festival combined with the feast of the Passover, having a use of food different from the usual one, and not customary; the use, namely, of unleavened bread" (ibid., 28.150). Josephus also differentiates the celebrations: the Passover commemorates the final night in Egypt in preparation for departure. The Festival of the Unleavened Bread relates to the journey: "In memory of that time of scarcity we keep a feast for eight days, which is called *the* feast of unleavened bread" (*Ant.* II.xiv.6–xv.1 // II.311–17).

As noted earlier, Ezra 5–6 mirrors and reverses the obstacles created by hostile outsiders in Ezra 4. For an outline of the parallels, see Vogt (1966, 47–43), Eskenazi (1988b and 1988a, 46–60), Mallau (1988, 67–73), and Matzal (2000, 567–68; and the Comments at Ezra 5:1–17). The framing Hebrew passages of the Aramaic section (Ezra 4:1–5 and 6:19–22) likewise reflect each other with the following: the appellations *yhwh* and *ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl,* twice in each; the phrase "king of Assyria"; the root *drš* in both; the use of *hāʾāreṣ* as the absolute noun of a construct phrase as an inclusion; and the relationship to neighbors as a framing motif. Additionally, as Matzal (2000, 567–68) writes, "A contrast between discouragement and encouragement also helps to delimit the unit: in iv 4 the adversaries are *mĕrappîm yĕdê ʿam-yĕhûdâ,* but in vi 22 Yahweh acts *lĕḥazzēq yĕdêhem.*" These parallels express the complete reversal of the crises and obstacles generated by Ezra 4.

The mirroring and reversal between Ezra 4 and Ezra 5–6 also applies to attitudes toward outsiders. Where Ezra 4:1–5 insists on exclusion, Ezra 6:21 defines criteria for inclusion. With their central institution in place, the Judeans can define who they are, who may join them, and on what basis.

The most controversial portion of this concluding paragraph is Ezra 6:21. EN is generally regarded as constructing rigid boundaries, defining various groups as outsiders and keeping them out. Yet a number of scholars interpret Ezra 6:21b as incorporating foreigners and/or converts or proselytes (Myers 1965a; Williamson 1985, 85; Blenkinsopp 1988, 133; Lau 2009; Jones 2015). Other scholars regard the passage as excluding foreigners but incorporating nonexiled Judeans (Batten 1913, 153; Brett 2008, 116 n. 11; Wills 2008, 63; Eskenazi 2014a; Japhet 1983b, 117; Japhet 2019, 178–79).

A minority interprets the second conjunction *waw* in Ezra 6:21 as explicative, not as consecutive. Thus Janzen (2008, 125–26) reads it as, "that is all who had separated themselves." So does Thiessen (2009). Jones (2015, 7–9), however, effectively defends

the more widely held interpretation of the conjunction as "and." But Jones also regards the parallels between Ezra 4:1–5 and 6:19–22 as a sign that the same people are in view, especially since only these groups are said to "seek" YHWH. Ezra 6:21, then, includes Yahwists with different histories (Jones 2015, 21) who in Ezra 4:1–5 have been rebuffed.

In Lau's (2009, 357–63) opinion, one of the main functions of Passover, in the Pentateuch and beyond, is to define membership within Israel as a nation (referring to Josh 5 and 2 Kgs 23). Lau concludes that Ezra 6:21 incorporates gentiles. First, EN does not recognize "a legitimate group of Jews outside those who returned from exile. . . . Hence, those who joined Israel should be regarded proselytes" (ibid., 365, citing Williamson 1985, 85). Second, biblical passages about Passover "refer to those foreigners who are willing to assimilate into Israel. An allowance for their participation is mentioned in Exod 12, Num 9, Deut 16, and 2 Kgs 23" (ibid.).

Japhet (2019, 178) is more to the point when she argues that the reference seeks to include Judeans in the land who had not gone into exile and thus were not among those returning. That explains why Ezra 6:21 does not mention circumcision, which is dominant in Pentateuchal passages about inclusion of outsiders in the Passover (ibid., 179). As Judeans, the men are already circumcised. I would add that silence throughout EN about circumcision is indeed a sign of intra Judean and Israelite conflict. EN's opponents have genealogy and circumcision on their side and cannot be disqualified on that basis. They can be challenged only on the basis of practices and their associated impurities (here and in Ezra 9:1–2).

Ezra 1–6 (as Williamson [1983] and others maintain) probably represents the latest stratum of EN. It depicts the first stage of rebuilding God's house. The Passover marks a new beginning, a new year, and a new, liberated status. Like the exodus and the release from Egyptian slavery, this Passover signals release from exile in order to serve Israel's God (Ezra 6:21), this time in the land with Jerusalem at the center. With the temple and cult restored in Stage One of reconstruction (Ezra 3–6), EN turns to the rebuilding of the community (Ezra 7–10).

IV.

Building YHWH's House, Stage Two: The People (7:1–10:44)

Introduction and Structure

Stage Two of rebuilding YHWH's house (Ezra 7–10) focuses on Ezra and building the community. Like Stage One (Ezra 3–6) it depicts successful beginning (Ezra 7–8), followed by an obstacle to overcome (Ezra 9), and resolution (Ezra 10). Ezra, the priest and scribe, gains royal permission to bring gifts to the temple and implement law, or *torah.* The obstacle is marriages with "the peoples of the lands," which Ezra (or EN) considers dangerous (Ezra 9). Resolution entails a communal decision to ban exogamy (Ezra 10). Like Stage One (Ezra 3–6) and Stage Three (Neh 1–7), Stage Two establishes boundaries. Like them, it combines diverse documents: a royal letter and lists, as well as a so-called Ezra Memoir. It presents Ezra as a leader who enables the community to shape its destiny in response to the question, "Who is among you of all his people?" (Ezra 1:3).

The following issues stand in the forefront of the study of Ezra 7–10:

1. The historicity of Ezra and the date of his mission (under Artaxerxes I in 458 BCE or Artaxerxes II in 398 BCE?)
2. The nature and reliability of the Ezra source (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8)
3. Ezra's mission as history and/or ideology
4. The nature and scope of Ezra's *torah*
5. The identity of the peoples of the land(s) and the crisis of "intermarriage" (Ezra 9–10)
6. The outcome of Ezra's reforms (in EN as well as in history)

The structure of Ezra 7–10 is as follows:

A. Introduction of protagonists and mission (7:1–8:14)
B. Initial implementation of the task (8:15–36)
C. The obstacle: Marriages with the peoples of the lands (9:1–15)
D. The obstacle overcome: The community resolves to separate from foreign wives and prohibit exogamy (10:1–44)

A. Introduction of Protagonists and Mission (7:1–8:14)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra is introduced as a priest and scribe with the best possible credentials, superior to any other priests in EN (Ezra 7:1–5). His goal is to study and implement God's *torah* (7:6, 10). King Artaxerxes's letter confirms his credentials and authorizes his mission, adding privileges (7:11–26). The introduction continues with Ezra's response and the beginning of the Ezra Memoir (7:27–28), followed by Ezra's introduction of his companions (8:1–14).

The structure of Ezra 7:1–8:14 is as follows:

1. The narrator's introduction of Ezra and his mission (7:1–10)
2. King Artaxerxes' introduction of Ezra and his mission (7:11–26)
3. Ezra's response to Artaxerxes' letter (7:27–28; beginning of the Ezra Memoir)
4. Ezra's companions (8:1–14)

1. THE NARRATOR'S INTRODUCTION OF EZRA AND HIS MISSION (7:1–10)

7 [1]And after these things in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Ezra, son of Seraiah son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah [2]son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, [3]son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, [4]son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, [5]son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the head priest, [6]he, Ezra, went up from Babylon; and he was a scribe skilled in the *torah* of Moses that YHWH, the God of Israel, had given; and the king gave him, in accordance with the hand of YHWH his God upon him, his entire request.

[7]And some of the sons of Israel and of the priests and the Levites and the singers and the gatekeepers and the Netinim went up to Jerusalem in year seven of Artaxerxes the king. [8]And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, it being the seventh year of the king. [9]For on the first of the first month was the founding of the going up from Babylon and in the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem in accordance with the good hand of his God upon him. [10]For Ezra prepared his heart to seek the *torah* of YHWH and to do and to teach in Israel law and ordinance.

Introduction

The narrator establishes Ezra's impeccable priestly credentials (Ezra 7:1–5), scribal skills, and goals (7:6–10). Ezra, whose family tree explicitly links him to the founding priest, is favored by God and the Persian king (7:6). He aims to seek God's *torah* and teach Israel its legal traditions (7:10). The history and date of his mission and the scope of his *torah* remain subject to scholarly debates; see the Comments below. All the names in Ezra's pedigree (7:1–5), except his, appear in the longer priestly genealogy in 1 Chr 5:28–41 [ET 6:1–15], without adding information (see the Notes below for the important names and the Comments below for more details).

Notes

7:1. *And after these things in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia.* The new era begins under king Artaxerxes. If Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) is meant, the year is 458 BCE. An Artaxerxes first appears in Ezra 4:7–23, out of chronological order. Ezra 6:14 lists an Artaxerxes as one of three kings responsible for supporting the temple's building. Artaxerxes' contribution to rebuilding unfolds in the coming sections. Egypt's revolt in 460 BCE made this an opportune time for loyal Judeans to elicit support from Persian kings, given Judah's location near the route to Egypt (on Artaxerxes I, see "The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE)" in the Introduction).

If Artaxerxes II is meant (as several scholars hold), then the year is 398 BCE. Egypt's successful revolt against Persia in 404 BCE and Artaxerxes II's inability to regain control likewise made this an opportune time for gaining support for Judah. The commentary below unfolds primarily with Artaxerxes I in mind, since it seeks to explicate EN's agenda, and EN places Ezra before Nehemiah (see further "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?" in the Introduction).

Artaxerxes. See Notes at Ezra 4:8, and "The Persian Empire (539–332 BCE)" in the Introduction. The name is spelled slightly differently from the Aramaic correspondence, with the letter *sin* replacing the *samek* here and in the rest of EN. Josephus has Xerxes, Artaxerxes' father (*Ant.* XI.v.1.121 // XI.v.1).

Ezra. The name means "help" and is probably an Aramaic form of the name Azariah ("YHWH has helped") but without the theophoric element. Ezra's sixteen-person pedigree (the first and longest lineage in the book) marks him as the most qualified priest in the book. The extensive praise by narrator and king alike highlights his exceptional stature. Ezra does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible but is the leading figure in 1 Esdras and several later writings, such as 4 Ezra. Rabbinic sources regard him as a second Moses and author of important reforms (see "A History of Interpretation" in the Introduction).

EN links Ezra explicitly to the first priest, Aaron. Ezra's family had been in exile for some six generations. Possible kinship between Ezra and Jeshua (Ezra 3–6) plays no role in EN. Ezra's pedigree closely resembles portions of the priestly genealogy in 1 Chr 5:28–41 [ET 6:1–15], which does not mention him. Nehemiah 12:1 mentions Ezra in the list of priests and Levites who came with Zerubbabel, but Ezra 2:2 does not include him (see "Seraiah" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a).

son of Seraiah. The head priest Seraiah in 2 Kgs 25:18–20 (see also Jer 52:24) had been deported when Jerusalem fell and was executed by Nebuchadnezzar. Second Kings makes no mention of offspring. First Chronicles 5:40–41 (which records his deportation, not execution) lists Jehozadak, the patronym of Jeshua in EN (Ezra 3:2), not Ezra, as Seraiah's son. More than 120 years separate that Seraiah from Ezra in 458 BCE. Missing are Ezra's immediate ancestors, including his patronym, information either lost or deemed less important to the author than the direct link to the leading priests before Jerusalem's fall. However, a Seraiah appears among the leaders in Ezra 2:2 (the parallel in Neh 7:7 has Azariah, a possible form of Seraiah or Ezra). Nehemiah 11:11 also mentions a Seraiah with a genealogy that resembles that in Ezra 7:1–5 but is shorter, perhaps representing an alternate priestly line (see Neh 12:10–26). It is difficult to determine which list is earlier. The gap between Seraiah and Ezra challenges the claim

that "priestly genealogies were maintained even in Diaspora" (Knoppers 2009a, 151). Knoppers is correct, however, that the pedigree focuses on Ezra's "ancestral roots in the land" in Judah, rather than in the diaspora.

of Azariah. The name is common in priestly and lay families in both preexilic and postexilic eras and resembles Ezra's own, but no story is attached to this individual. First Kings 4:2 lists an Azariahu as Zadok's son and among Solomon's officials.

of Hilkiah. Second Kings 22 (also 2 Chr 34) presents Hilkiah as the high priest during King Josiah's reign. In 622/621 BCE he found "the book of the *torah*" in the temple, a book that, with the prophetess Huldah's authentication, led to Josiah's religious and political reforms. Modern scholars identify that *torah* as a version of Deuteronomy. The connection between Hilkiah and the *torah* forecasts Ezra's role as transmitter of the *torah.*

7:2. *of Zadok.* Second Samuel identifies Zadok and Abiathar as the leading priests during David's reign. Zadok gained greater prominence by supporting Solomon. Second Samuel 8:17 lists him as son of Ahitub, as here. It has been hypothesized that Zadok was originally a non-Israelite priest in Jerusalem whose family was grafted onto the Israelite line once David took the city. Although this theory no longer commands the influence it once had, the root *z.d.q.* in pre-Israelite names and divinities connected with Jerusalem (e.g., Melchizedek in Gen 14) is striking (see Rooke 2000).

The Zadokite priesthood became subject to controversy in the Bible from Ezekiel's time. Ezekiel recognizes only Zadokites as the legitimate priests (Ezek 40:46, 44:15), placing them in charge of the altar (Ezek 40:46). But Zadok appears only twice in EN (here and Neh 11:11) and only here in relation to Aaron (Hunt 2006).

of Ahitub. Zadok's ancestor here, in Neh 11:11, 1 Chr 5:34 and 38, 2 Sam 8:17, and elsewhere. No stories are attached to him.

7:5. *of Phinehas.* Aaron's grandson (Exod 6:25) is noted for exceptional zeal, for which his line received the promise of eternal priesthood (Num 25:1–15); see also Ps 106:30–31. Ben Sira 45:23–24 and 1 Macc 2:26, 54 likewise praise him. Ezra 8:2 lists another descendant of Phinehas in Ezra's entourage.

of Eleazar. Aaron's third son (Exod 6:25) became first in the priestly line after the death of his older brothers Nadab and Abihu. He was invested with Aaron's clothes and office upon Aaron's death (Num 20:25–28).

of Aaron the head priest. The pedigree culminates with Aaron, the founding figure of the priestly line in the Pentateuch. While Aaronide priests play a leading role in Chronicles, Aaron is mentioned only three times in EN (here and in Neh 10:39 and 12:47).

Like all priests, Ezra belongs to the tribe of Levi and is a descendant of Aaron. But Ezra 7 highlights his Aaronide lineage. Postexilic biblical texts reflect conflict over the scope of priestly power (Rooke 2000; Hunt 2006). Tension between priests and Levites appears in EN as well, hinted, for example, in Ezra 8:15 (Rooke 2000; Hunt 2006; for a less compelling study, see Schaper 2000). Ezra's impeccable priestly lineage lends special significance to his efforts on behalf of the Levites.

head priest. Aaron's title resembles that of Seraiah in 2 Kgs 25:18–20. First Esdras 8:2 has "the high priest" (lit. "first priest").

7:6. *he, Ezra.* The repetition of Ezra's name signals that the intervening names are an insertion.

went up from Babylon. Hebrew for the city Babylon (NJPS) and the province Babylonia (NRSV) is the same. Ezra, a Babylonian-trained scribe of the *torah,* exemplifies the vitality of Judean life and learning in Babylonia. His story also illustrates that many Judeans chose not to return to Judah. Rabbinic sages defend Ezra's delay in going up to Jerusalem, claiming that he waited until his venerated teacher died before undertaking the journey (*Song of Songs Rabbah* 5.5).

he was a scribe skilled in the torah. Ezra is the only biblical figure called both priest and scribe. The fusion of the two roles is EN's contribution and reorients the scope of the priestly role. It also reorients priestly *torah* from an oral to a textual source (see Eskenazi 1988a, 73; Venema 2004, 145; Yoo 2017, 91–92). The semantic range of "scribe," *sōpēr,* is wide. The word is linked etymologically to counting, writing, and telling. In the Persian period (as for millennia earlier in the ANE) it designated a profession marked above all by literacy and writing. Scribal arts included recording, copying, codifying and transmitting written material, and composing both law and lore. Some ANE scribes were key administrators, even personal advisors to the king, such as the scribe Ahikar. As a scribe, Ezra belonged to the educated class that qualified him for a high administrative position.

Deuteronomy 17:18 presumes that Levitical priests possessed scribal skills when it requires them to copy the book of the *torah* for the king or supervise him when he does.

a scribe skilled. The term translated as "skilled" relates to "ready" or "fluent" (Venema 2004, 145). Psalms 45:2 uses the same expression. In the neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, the Akkadian term *sēpiru,* cognate of the Hebrew *sōphēr,* "scribe," specified an alphabetic, rather than a cuneiform, scribe. The cuneiform scribe, or *ṭupšarru* ("tablet writer"), incised Akkadian signs upon clay with a reed stylus (Bloch 2018). Aramaic could be easily inked on parchment, papyrus, or leather. As Aramaic became the *lingua franca* of the Persian imperial administration in the provinces, scribes became a major component of imperial administration and efficacy. Bloch (ibid., 437–44) identifies Judean scribes in the Murashu tablets from Nippur in Babylonia (dated 454–414 BCE). The role of scribes in the formation of the Hebrew Bible remains subject to intensive study (Carr 2011; Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid 2016; Schniedewind 2019; S. Jacobs 2020).

Ezra's title closely resembles Ahikar's. The Aramaic version from Elephantine describes Ahikar as a "wise and skilled scribe" (*spr ḥkym wmhyr*) (Ahikar 1:1). In Tobit, the Assyrian king "appointed Ahikar . . . over all the accounts of his kingdom, and he had authority over the entire administration. . . . Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esar-haddon reappointed him" (Tob 1:21–22).

Like Ahikar, Ezra as scribe was qualified to serve as an advisor to the royal court. Schaeder (1930, 42–49) considered him a "minister for Jewish affairs," because *sāpĕrā'* in Aramaic denotes a minister of state. The early popularity of this position overlooked the lack of evidence for such a ministry (see Venema 2004, 146–47, esp. n. 22; and Grabbe 1994, 293–94). Ezra's chief affiliation in EN is with God's *torah.*

in the torah *of Moses that YHWH, the God of Israel, had given.* The clause testifies to the *torah's* divine origin. Deuteronomy 31:9 makes priests the custodians of Moses's *torah.* In EN, the *torah* of "Moses the man of God" had guided the very first steps in

restoring the temple cult (Ezra 3:2–4); the final steps were according to the book of Moses (6:18). The wording here specifies the *torah*'s divine origin.

Readers for millennia assumed that Ezra's *torah* was the Pentateuch. Modern scholars, however, debate this issue and Ezra's role in the *torah*'s formation (see the Comments below). By attributing the *torah* to Moses, EN explicitly negates the view that Ezra was its author.

the torah. The reference to "scribe" with *torah* indicates that the *torah* is a written text, but its content and extent remain difficult to determine.

and the king gave him, in accordance with the hand of YHWH his God upon him, his entire request. The mission was initiated by Ezra, not the Persian king. EN places the initiative for the mission with Ezra, who receives royal consent (Nehemiah likewise initiates his mission; see Neh 1–2). Ezra needs to have royal backing if he is to exert authority in Judah. Royal authorization is also needed for travel, transfer of gifts to Judah, tax exemptions (Ezra 7:24), and judicial privileges (7:25–26).

The parallel in 1 Esd 8:4 omits mention of God's role and elaborates with "and the king showed him honor, for he found favor before the king in all his requests."

Berquist (1995, 108–13, 137–42) (among others) argues that Ezra's main mission was to serve Persian interests and that the *torah* was a Persian document. This conclusion is problematic. A Persian king was not likely to have known about the small province of Judah/Yehud unless someone brought it to his attention. Consequently, the biblical scenario in which Ezra initiates the project is the more credible. Ezra or some members of the Judean community would have had to approach the king and request support of Judah/Yehud (presumably highlighting benefits to the crown).

the hand of YHWH his God upon him. This idiom for divine favor is typical of EN. The narrator vouches for God's support of Ezra, and Ezra will recognize it in his mission (Ezra 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31). The NJPS paraphrases, "thanks to the benevolence of the Lord toward him."

his entire request. Like Nehemiah (Neh 2:1–8), Ezra elicits and gets royal support for his mission, although readers are not privy to Ezra's negotiations with the king (in contrast to Nehemiah's in Neh 2:1–8).

The king's letter (Ezra 7:12–26) grants the community and Ezra numerous privileges and especially authorizes Ezra to implement the law of his God and the law of the king (7:26). EN implies that these were Ezra's requests.

7:7. *And some of the sons of Israel and of the priests and the Levites and the singers and the gatekeepers and the Netinim went up to Jerusalem in year seven of Artaxerxes the king.* Ezra 7:7–9 interrupts the flow between 7:6 and 10 with a digression that proleptically sums up the dates of the mission. The digression begins with the community that joins Ezra. The order in the list parallels that of Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, connecting this repatriation to the earlier return. Scholars concur that this passage is a later editorial insertion (Williamson 1985, 88–90; Pakkala 2004, 27; Yoo 2017, 83–84). The proclivity to sum material up proleptically ("flash forward") accounts also for Ezra 1:5–6, which describes not only the return under Cyrus but also those that follow. Here it affirms from the start the role of the community in Ezra's mission.

As "some of" indicates, other Judeans remained in Babylonia. But EN keeps diaspora only as a backdrop.

Levites . . . singers . . . gatekeepers . . . Netinim. For each of these groups of cult personnel, see Notes at Ezra 2:36–54. It is hardly plausible that all these functionaries retained their titles or qualifications when in exile. More likely we have here a retrojection, as in Chronicles, based on later practices. The absence of some of these groups from Ezra 8, where Ezra lists his entourage, supports this conclusion.

The mention of Levites here, despite Ezra 8:15 (where Ezra does not find Levites in his entourage), is unproblematic. The present verses are written from the perspective of Ezra's successful arrival, after recruiting Levites.

year seven of Artaxerxes the king. The year is 458 BCE if Artaxerxes I is meant. According to extrabiblical sources, this was the year when Artaxerxes I sent Megabyzus to quell the Egyptian revolt. Instability in Egypt makes an excellent backdrop for imperial concessions to a loyal local group such as the Judeans. The same dynamics can be supposed in 398 BCE if Artaxerxes II is meant, given Egypt's successful revolt in 404 BCE. EN, however, is interested only in how the king advances the cause of Judah.

7:8. *And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, it being the seventh year of the king.* The LXX and several other ancient manuscripts (Syriac and Vulgate) have the plural, "they came," which many translations follow. The referent could be Ezra and/or his fellow travelers. The MT "he came" highlights the intrusiveness of the previous verse. This could be read as a resumptive repetition that swerves back to Ezra as subject after a brief digression. Alternatively, the singular verb can express a common purpose or action (e.g., Num 12:1). The very awkwardness draws attention here to the close relation between Ezra and his entourage.

in the fifth month. The month is Av (August). See Notes at 7:9.

it being the seventh year of the king. The form of the phrase is unusual (in contrast to v. 7) and leads Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 66) to postulate a reference to a Jubilee year. Koch (1974) also suggested that 458 BCE was a sabbatical year. EN, however, shows no interest in these special categories.

7:9. *For on the first of the first month was the founding of the going up from Babylon and in the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem.* Twice we learn that the journey took place in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, twice that the arrival was in the fifth month. Only once (here) do we discover that departure took place in the first month. The subsequent mention of departure on the twelfth of the first month (Ezra 8:31) is unproblematic; Ezra 7:9 speaks of "founding" the return, not the actual (delayed) departure.

These dates correspond to early April for departure and early August for arrival. Clines (1993, 710–11) calculates April 8 and August 4 for 458 BCE, which correspond to conventional ANE timetables for expeditions (military or commercial), usually beginning in the spring (see, e.g., 2 Sam 11:1). The duration of four months for a journey of roughly 1,400 kilometers (Fried 2015a, 299, has 1,750 kilometers) from Babylon to Jerusalem is plausible. According to Herodotus, an army averaged about 18 kilometers a day.

But these historically plausible dates may also carry symbolic associations, evoking significant moments in Israel's history. This journey begins in the month of the exodus from Egypt. Arrival takes place in the month of the first temple's destruction (2 Kgs

25:8), as if to reverse exile. The fast during the fifth month in Zechariah (Zech 7:1–7) apparently commemorates the destruction. The unusual use of the term "founding" also points to symbolic associations.

the founding of the going up. The verb *y.s.d.* typically refers to founding an edifice, a building; its usage here is unique. Ezra 3:6 and 3:10–13 highlight the verb at the founding of the temple. The word *maʿăleh,* a noun of the root *ʿ.l.h.* meaning "to go up," is also unusual. While the Bible consistently speaks about going to Jerusalem as "going up," here it recalls Cyrus's decree (see, e.g., Ezra 1:3). The noun in the singular appears only here and in 1 Chr 17:17 (where the context focuses on David's dynasty and David's plans for a temple). The plural form of *maʿăleh* elsewhere usually refers to some sort of physical structure, such as stairs (e.g., Ezek 40:6), often those of the temple (see, e.g., Neh 12:37); see also the psalmodic superscription the Song of Ascents, *šîr hammāʿălôt* (Pss 120–134).

The unique combination of "founding" and "going up," or "ascent," in the Hebrew of Ezra 7:9 expresses several important connections. It explicitly harks back to the founding of the temple in Ezra 3. "Founding" elsewhere always refers to elements in YHWH's house. The language suggests that Ezra and his community also constitute a foundation of YHWH's house.

in accordance with the good hand of his God upon him. The repeated reference to divine benevolence emphasizes the sustaining presence of God.

7:10. *For Ezra prepared his heart to seek the* torah *of YHWH and to do and to teach in Israel law and ordinance.* This verse is key for understanding Ezra's mission in EN (Fensham 1982, 101). The mission was initiated by Ezra, not the Persian king. The narrator employs an omniscient perspective to disclose a person's motives with certainty, whereas elsewhere in the Bible the reader infers the motives from actions and dialogue (Alter 1981, 63–87; Sternberg 1985, 129–52). Consequently, the reader here is assured that these indeed are Ezra's goals. These specific goals—to seek *torah,* practice, and teach, in that order—determine and explain Ezra's actions in the rest of the book.

to seek. In preexilic texts the verb *d.r.š.* mostly refers to seeking divine counsel and guidance (e.g., Jer 10:21), typically from prophets, priests, or other intermediaries (2 Kgs 3:11, Isa 8:19). For the rabbinic sages, the term specifies a process of interpretation, hence midrash. EN is a pivotal text in the evolution of this word's meaning from revelation through human mediators to searching scripture. Ezra 7 exemplifies this transformation through the figure of Ezra. The NJPS and NRSV translations of *lidrôš* as "study" is to the point but insufficient.

The parallel of "to seek" in the conclusion of Stage One (Ezra 6:21) links the present statement not only with what follows but also with what preceded: Ezra's mission is in part a response to seeking YHWH in Ezra 6:21. Seeking YHWH becomes seeking the *torah* of YHWH.

Whatever Ezra's royal appointment entailed (Ezra 7:12–26), and however it comported with the interests of the Persian Empire, Ezra 7:10 shows him first and above all as a seeker, practitioner, and teacher of *torah.* Everything about Ezra in EN is in service to these goals.

Fried (2001, 2014) presents a drastically different portrait of the historical Ezra. She posits Persian impetus for Ezra's mission and regards his relationship to the *torah* as an editorial insertion.

What is missing in EN's description of Ezra's goals and qualifications is also important. The usual sacerdotal tasks of priests in the Bible do not appear. Whereas the main priestly roles throughout the Bible, especially the Pentateuch, entail officiating at sacrifices, assessing purity, and administering the sanctuary, Ezra, priest though he be, makes study, practice, and teaching his first priorities.

First Esdras 8:7 casts Ezra's skills and achievements as *faits accomplis:* "For Ezra possessed great knowledge, so that he omitted nothing from the law of the Lord or the commandments, but taught all Israel all the ordinances and judgments."

the torah *of YHWH.* The *torah* of Moses (Ezra 3:2 and 7:6) is now cast as the *torah* of Israel's God (see already 7:6). This expression, "*torah* of YHWH," in EN is only here and in Neh 9:3. In both places it comes from the narrator (Ezra himself, oddly, never uses the word *torah*). More common references to *torah* in EN include the "*torah* of God" (Neh 8:8, 18; 10:29, 30; and a unique plural form in Neh 9:13) or simply "the *torah*" (Neh 8:2, 3, 9; 12:44; 13:3). EN combines several terms into a single category in which they become equivalent; hence the *torah* of Moses is the *torah* of YHWH and the laws and ordinances as well.

In Ezra 3:2–3, the *torah* of Moses determines sacrifices; in Ezra 6:18, the book of Moses guides the reconstitution of cultic personnel. With Ezra, *torah* applies to a wider range of teachings.

to do. Fishbane (1988, 31), on the basis of Akkadian cognates and Eccl 12:12, connects "to do" with technical scribal activities, concluding that it "should be rendered 'to compose' or 'to compile books,' not to 'do' or 'make' them." If so, Ezra "set his mind to inquire of the *torah* of YHWH, and to make and teach the law and ordinance/judgment in [the community of] Israel' (Ezra 7:10)" (ibid., 108). But "to do" in EN also refers to the observance of Sukkoth (3:4) and Passover (6:22), to building activities (Ezra 3:9, Neh 2:16), and to executing divine commands (Ezra 10:11). It has broader implications of carrying out what God's *torah* requires. Kraemer (1993, 81 n. 16) is apt: "to investigate the teaching [Torah] of YHWH, to observe and to teach ordinances and judgments in Israel." Ezra's own actions are to be regarded as examples of *torah* teachings (something Kraemer [ibid.] overlooks when he claims that Ezra does not teach).

to teach. The sequence of Ezra's goals is significant: teaching follows doing, as if to say one teaches by what one does. Ezra's actions in what follows exemplify teachings. While not in the foreground of priestly responsibilities, teaching is a priestly and a Levitical role in Lev 10:11 and Deut 33:10. But the verb appears in the Pentateuch only in Deuteronomy, and in relation to Moses.

in Israel law and ordinance. This word pair occurs only three other times in the entire Bible, twice at significant points in Israel's covenantal history: Exod 15:25, where Moses implements *ḥōq ûmišpāṭ* after the exodus, and Josh 24:25, in Joshua's covenant at Shechem (the third is at 1 Sam 30:25). This expression aligns Ezra with Moses and Joshua, who establish law and ordinance at key junctures. The rabbis also connect the phrase with Deut 4:14 and Moses as teacher: God appointed Moses to teach laws and ordinances; now Ezra undertakes the same role (b. *Sanh.* 21b). These terms can stand for specific legal categories: here they refer to the totality of covenantal traditions. The *torah,* then, is not a mere icon, a sacred object to be venerated like the images of a god (*pace* Tigay 2013; and Fried 2015a, 301), but (in EN) is a source for specific attitudes and behavior.

Having introduced Ezra's qualifications and goals, the narrator withdraws. Next comes Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:11–26), and then Ezra himself (7:27–9:15). The narrator's third-person report resumes in Ezra 10:1.

Comments

Stage One of building YHWH's house in Jerusalem entailed restoring the temple (Ezra 3–6). Stage Two means rebuilding the community (Ezra 7–10). It begins by introducing the protagonists and the mission, with Ezra in focus. Ezra the priest and scribe goes up to Jerusalem in order to seek, or study, God's *torah* "and to do and to teach in Israel law and ordinance" (7:10). The time is King Artaxerxes' seventh year, either 458 or 398 BCE.

The narrator who introduces Ezra vouches for Ezra's qualification and goals (Ezra 7:1–10); the king will authorize Ezra's mission (7:11–26), and Ezra's own "voice," via the Ezra Memoir, will conclude the introduction (7:27–8:14).

A sixteen-name pedigree (Ezra 7:1–5) positions Ezra as the most qualified priest in EN. Several names in his pedigree evoke important moments in Israel's history. While all priests ostensibly descend from Aaron, EN showcases Ezra's credentials, and only his, as beyond dispute. Only he, not Jeshua, is linked with Aaron.

The names in Ezra's pedigree closely parallel the genealogy in 1 Chr 5:28–41 [ET 6:1–15] (see also 1 Chr 6:35–38). Some recur in Neh 11:11. The most striking feature is that 1 Chr 5:40–41 lists Jehozadak as Seraiah's son, whereas Ezra 7:1 places Ezra at that position. Jeshua, son of Jozadak (e.g., Ezra 3:2), does not appear in either list.

The historical reliability of information in such lists in Ezra or Chronicles can no longer be assessed. Biblical lineages are usually artificial constructs that express or create patterns of identity (Wilson 1977). Chronicles begins with Levi and concludes with Jehozadak, the priest exiled to Babylon. Ezra's pedigree extends only to Aaron (not Levi). Ezra's priestly credentials most interest EN, establishing Ezra as the most important heir to the priestly dynasty.

This Stage Two, like Stage One, is a response to Cyrus's decree to build God's house. The repeated language of "going up" in Ezra 7:6, 7, 9 recalls Cyrus's exhortation ("let him go up" in Ezra 1:3). Unusual use of terms like "the founding" of "the going up" makes the project concrete with language for founding the temple. Stage Two is also linked to the conclusion of Stage One (6:21–22), with Ezra's goal to seek (*d.r.š.*) YHWH's *torah* corresponding to a community that seeks Israel's God (6:21 and 7:10).

Ezra 7:1–10 offers a realistic time frame for the preparations and journey: a departure in spring with arrival four months later. The insertion in 7:8–9 records precise dates: from the first of the first month to the first of the fifth month. It emphasizes arrival by mentioning it twice (Ezra 7:8 and 9). The dates recall the exodus in the first month and the destruction of the first temple in the fifth month (see 2 Kgs 25:8 and Zech 7:5). Ezra's journey can be read as a symbolic reenactment of the liberation from Egypt, and his mission as a reversal of the earlier destruction and exile (Williamson 1985; Yoo 2017).

The mission is described as "the founding of the going up" (Ezra 7:9), using a verb that refers elsewhere to an edifice of some sorts (e.g., 1 Kgs 6:37). This verb, "to found," presents Ezra's mission as analogous to the physical founding of the temple (Ezra 3:6, 10, 11, 12). Rather than emend the text with more conventional terminology (as most

translations have done; see the NRSV's "begun" and NJPS's "started"), we do best to recognize here a specific interpretation of the mission: Ezra and his entourage for EN are building something concrete and enduring, comparable to the temple, namely, the community itself.

Scholars continue to debate (1) the historicity and date of Ezra, (2) the nature of the Ezra narrative (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8), (3) the nature of Ezra's roles and mission, and (4) the nature and scope of Ezra's *torah.*

THE HISTORICITY AND DATE OF EZRA

Torrey (1896, 1910) famously construed Ezra as a figment of the Chronicler's imagination, but most scholars today (e.g., Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988; Fried 2015a; Yoo 2017; Japhet 2019) rightly accept the likelihood of a historical Ezra, even if some details about him are not reliable. There is a growing consensus that material about Ezra is shaped with the Nehemiah Memoir in mind (In der Smitten 1973; Wright 2005), but this neither proves nor disproves his historicity.

EN places Ezra before Nehemiah, implying that Ezra came in 458 BCE, the seventh year of Artaxerxes I. Van Hoonacker (1890, 1923) argued that Nehemiah came first. Those who date Ezra to 458 BCE include Myers (1965a), Clines (1984), Williamson (1985), and Blenkinsopp (1988). Those who date him to 398 BCE, the seventh year of Artaxerxes II, include Noth (1958), Carr (2011), Fried (2015a), and Becking (2018). Suggestions by Albright (1963) and Bright (1981) that Ezra came in 428 BCE have not found supporters; neither has Lebram's (1987) second-century BCE date. The years 458 and 398 BCE are equally plausible historically for Ezra's mission, placing him at a time when Persian kings would have been particularly attentive to the Levant, given revolts in Egypt (see "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?" in the INTRODUCTION).

Ezra 7:6 reports that Ezra received full royal support for his mission. While some terms of this support defy credibility (see NOTES at Ezra 7:12–26 and 8:26–27), the Elephantine papyri confirm that Judeans in high positions advocated for Judean interests under Persian auspices (Hananiah in *TAD* A 4.1 // Cowley 21, and *TAD* A 4.6 // Cowley 38; Porten 1968, 278–82). Consequently, there is nothing implausible about Ezra as a historical figure, or about his date in 458 BCE, even though no evidence of Ezra exists outside EN or the traditions that derive from it. EN's portrait of him is no less credible than Nehemiah's.

THE NATURE OF THE EZRA NARRATIVE (EZRA 7–10 AND NEH 8)

See "Sources and Composition" in the INTRODUCTION, and the COMMENTS at Ezra 9 below.

THE NATURE OF EZRA'S ROLES AND MISSION

EN depicts Ezra as a priest and scribe aiming to teach *torah* to Israel and granted royal permission to do so. A well-qualified diaspora Judean, Ezra initiates the mission (Ezra 7:6). Within the biblical world, Ezra's priestly credentials render him a custodian of God's *torah* and an authority over its interpretation (as per Deuteronomy). Within the cultural world of the Persian Empire, Ezra's credentials as a skilled scribe with royal support point beyond mere literacy and education. Scribes in the ANE were the educated elite as well as administrators (van der Toorn 2007, 109–41, esp. 109–10). Like

the wide-ranging meaning "secretary" in English ("secretary of state," "secretary of the board," a university's "secretary to the president," who might compose the president's letters or primarily be a typist), "scribe" defines a variety of social and political positions.

Scribes in the Bible first appear during the monarchy in administrative roles at the service of the court or temple (P. R. Davies 1988; Schniedewind 2004; Carr 2005; van der Toorn 2007). Archaeological evidence confirms this textual record. The Bible typically designates these scribes in relation to the people or institutions they serve (scribe of the king in 2 Kgs 12:11 or of YHWH's house in 2 Kgs 22:3). Ezra is unique in that his master is not an institution or individual but the *torah.*

While it is reasonable to take EN's description of Ezra's position at face value, a number of scholars attempt to establish the historical reality behind his biblical portrait. Schaeder (1930, 42–49) suggested that Ezra was a minister for Jewish affairs. Hoglund (1992, 226–40), Berquist (1995), and Fried (2014) consider Ezra an agent of the Persian government aiming to implement Persian interests. They construe these interests differently. Hoglund's Ezra came to oversee a specific socioeconomic organization of the community in order to fortify Judah in the face of Egyptian revolts. Berquist, who supposes that the Pentateuch was codified and promulgated by King Darius, claims that Ezra was sent to strengthen Persian presence in the colony (ibid., 110–19). Fried (2014, 8–27, esp. 26–27), who contests Ezra's priestly credentials and relation to the *torah,* regards him as a Persian official in charge of appointing Persian judges and inspecting the proper conduct of satraps. Becking (2018, 6, 98–100), for whom Ezra was a junior Persian official, considers Ezra's mission in 398 BCE as an attempt to reestablish justice in the wake of political irregularities under the Persian governor Bagoses. Hoglund, Berquist, Fried, and Becking share the presumption that the mission was initiated by Persian authorities and driven by Persian interests. But available sources do not support such a presumption. Evidence from Elephantine and elsewhere illustrates the degree to which local groups managed their own communal lives without Persian knowledge or interference, turning to authorities only in time of conflict. Egypt's governor, for example, did not know that Egyptians destroyed the Judean temple in the military colony under his direct command (*TAD* A 4.7 and *TAD* A 4.8). Although administrative networks were well established and effective, much communal life was conducted outside them. There is every reason to suppose that reforms in Judah would have come to a king's attention only if a well-connected Judean requested them. Such an emissary most likely would have touted value to the empire, but this should not be confused with his actual goals (Yoo 2017, 202–3).

Yoo (2017, 91) highlights the uniqueness of the title "priest-scribe," defining Ezra's role within two contexts: Judean (priest) and Persian chancellery (scribe). The two titles express the kind of accommodation that EN as a whole is constructing for its community under Persian rule, crafting a distinctive self-definition within the empire.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF EZRA'S *TORAH*

In the Hebrew Bible, the term *torah* (teaching, law, custom, like the Greek *nomos*) designates a number of different authoritative teachings: Proverbs mentions the "*torah* of your mother" (Prov 1:8, 6:20), and Leviticus, the *torah* of the burnt offerings (Lev 6:2 [NRSV 6:9]). In Deuteronomy, *torah* crystallizes into a written text, originating from God, transcribed by Moses, and destined to shape Israel's life. This is how EN uses the

term. The textual emphasis that begins with Deuteronomy receives its decisive public recognition in EN. As a priest, scribe, and scholar, Ezra will transmit and transfer "the book of the *torah*" to the community as a whole to study and implement (Neh 8).

Implementing Deuteronomy appears to be EN's overarching framework. Deuteronomy, after all, is the one book that defines itself as "*the torah*" (Deut 4:44). Nehemiah 13:1–3 practically quotes it. EN's expanded communal participation at the expense of royal prerogatives corresponds to Deuteronomy's vision of Israel in the land (McBride 1987; Berman 2008). EN casts the restoration as a more faithful settling of the promised land than the first led by Joshua. Some details, however, like those about Sukkoth (Ezra 3:4–5, Neh 8:13–18), reflect Leviticus and Numbers.

Early critical scholars supposed that Ezra's *torah* was largely the Pentateuch as we know it (Spinoza 1677; Wellhausen 1883). Today, two contrasting approaches dominate the field with a great variety within each. "New Documentarians" hold a revised version of the four sources theory (e.g., Schwartz, 2011; Baden, 2012; Stackert 2022). "Post-Documentarians" (Yoo's [2017] suggested name), or "Supplementarians," suppose an evolution of small literary units that were combined and expanded through gradual redactional activities (Rendtorff 1977 [ET 1990]; Blum 1990; Kratz 2000/2005; Wright 2020). Both groups converge in recognizing the time of Ezra as decisive for the Pentateuch's formation but understand its scope in a sharply contrasting fashion. The New Documentarians consider Ezra and the Persian period largely the culmination of the process. This implies that Ezra's *torah* was basically like today's Pentateuch (so also Friedman 1987; Williamson 1985; Japhet 2016; Yoo 2017). The Supplementarians consider the Persian period to be the beginning of collecting and editing and place the final version in the Hellenistic period. In this case Ezra's *torah* was more limited (Rendtorff 1977; Kratz 2000/2005, 2007).

Carr (2011) and Bautch (2016) propose a middle position. For Carr, the Persian period's contribution was the "ongoing transmission, minor adaptation, and reconstrual of pre-Persian-period compositions" (ibid., 223). Persian-period scribes reshaped old texts to apply them to their present circumstances. Bautch dates both Ezra and the "forerunner of the Pentateuch" to the early fourth century BCE, claiming that the *torah* already included P (the Priestly source) and D (the Deuteronomist source) (ibid., 526). (For summaries and reviews, see Carr 1997; Knoppers and Levinson 2007; Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid 2016; Albertz 2018.)

I too see the Persian period as the decisive context for the Pentateuch's formation, with subsequent expansion and editing. Claims about the compiling of Egyptian religious traditions under Darius illustrate similar activities in the Persian period (but see Redford 2001, who contests the relevance of these accounts for EN). Ezra's *torah* in Nehemiah 8, then, would include most of Deuteronomy and much of the rest of the Pentateuch. What of this *torah* actually came from Babylon with Ezra or others cannot, in my view, be decided. Both EN and the Pentateuch show a commitment to interweaving diverse perspectives.

Knoppers and Levinson (2007, 1–11) highlight major questions about the acceptance of the *torah* as an authoritative public text. These include: Was the Pentateuch a compromise between different circles (priests, scribes, and others)? If so, what were the concerns of the specific parties? What was the impact of diaspora-Judah relations on the rise of the *torah?*: "are we to imagine that the Pentateuch (or Proto-Pentateuch)

arose in Judah, or are we to imagine that it was brought to Judah from one of the Judean communities in the diaspora (as implied by Ezra 7)? Are we to think of an even lengthier and more complicated process by which writings from different communities were edited and reedited in new settings before being compiled?" (ibid., 5). Was there a related, parallel process in the north (Samaria) and in Judah during the Persian period? Was the Torah "originally a predominantly Northern document that came to be accepted in Judah?" (ibid.).

The fine scholarly responses in Knoppers and Levinson's edited volume shed important light on these questions but also illustrate why it is difficult to reach definitive answers to such questions about the Pentateuch's history. I tentatively surmise that Ezra's *torah* in Nehemiah 8, reflected in EN, is largely the Pentateuch as we have it (see also Japhet 2016). But I also assume that work on it continued.

Scribal responsibilities in the ANE, and the formulations of Ezra's role in Ezra 7:1–10, lend credence to the theory that Ezra's activities could have included compiling, editing, and redacting Mosaic traditions. Surprisingly, Ezra himself makes no explicit mention of the *torah* in Ezra 7–10, not even when he practically quotes it (Ezra 9:11–12). Is EN aiming to communicate that in the thirteen years between Ezra's arrival (7:8–9) and the public reading of the *torah* (Neh 8) Ezra was assiduously copying or editing it (and training the Levites who teach in Neh 8:7)? Did a historical Ezra edit the material or collect it? These questions cannot be answered at this point.

Several later traditions credit Ezra with significant influence upon the *torah.* Fourth Ezra (2 Esdras) credits him with rescuing scripture from oblivion. Rabbinic sages regard him worthy to have received the *torah* for Israel had Moses not preceded him; they credit him with changing the *torah's* script to "Assyrian" (i.e., Aramaic), which is used to this day (b. Sanh. 21b). Jerome (fifth century CE) explains that "whether you choose to call Moses the author of the Pentateuch or Ezra the renewer of the same work, I raise no objections" (cited by Friedman 1987, 225). As Friedman observes, Ezra had the means, motive, and opportunity to compile the *torah* (ibid., 223–25). But as Japhet (2016) observes, EN, our only source, does not shed much light on the process of the *torah*'s composition.

EN portrays Ezra above all as responsible for preserving, promulgating, disseminating, and implementing the *torah* as a *public document.* Nehemiah 8:1–12 illustrates this message most fully. The emphasis on both Ezra's scribal and his priestly roles implies Ezra's role in editing, copying, or composing as well as legitimately interpreting and applying the *torah.*

2. KING ARTAXERXES' INTRODUCTION OF EZRA AND HIS MISSION (7:11–26)

7 [11]And this is a copy of the document that the king, Artaxerxes, gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, scribe of the words of YHWH's commandments and his laws concerning Israel. [12]"Artaxerxes king of kings to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, etc., and now: [13]An order has been issued by me that everyone in my kingdom from the people Israel and its priests and Levites who freely offers to go to Jerusalem with you, let him go. [14]For [you are] sent from before the king and his seven counselors to investigate concerning Yehud and Jerusalem with the law of your God that is in your

hand, [15]and to bring silver and gold that the king and his counselors freely offered to the God of Israel whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, [16]and all silver and gold that you find in all of the province of Babylonia, with the free offering of the people and the priests who are freely offered to the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. [17]Because of this you will diligently buy with this silver young bulls, rams, lambs, and their meal offerings and their libations, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem. [18]And whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold—in accordance with the will of your God—do. [19]And the vessels that are given to you for the cult service of the house of your God, deliver fully before the God of Jerusalem. [20]And the rest of the necessities of the house of your God that will fall upon you to give, give from the treasury of the king.

[21]"And from me, King Artaxerxes, an order has been issued to all the treasurers who are in Across-the-River that all that Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, asks of you be done diligently, [22]up to one hundred talents of silver, and up to 100 *kors* of wheat, and up to 100 *baths* of wine, and up to 100 *baths* of oil, and salt without accounting. [23]All that is the order of the God of heaven let it be done with all haste for the house of the God of heaven, for why should there be wrath upon the kingdom of the king and his sons? [24]And we are making it known to you concerning all the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim, and cult servants of this house of God, that it is not authorized to impose upon them toll-tax, and tribute and levy.

[25]"And you Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges and let them judge all the people who are in Across-the-River, all who know the laws of your God; and whoever does not know, make it known to them. [26]And anyone who does not do the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be done to him diligently, either death or uprooting or confiscation of property and imprisonment."

Introduction and Structure

Written in Aramaic, but with distinctly Judean and Hebraic elements, Artaxerxes' letter to Ezra authorizes a return to Judah (Ezra 7:13), appoints Ezra to supervise Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of Ezra's God (7:14), pledges generous support for Jerusalem's temple and its cult (7:15–24), and confers on Ezra the authority to enforce the law of God as well as the law of the king (7:25–26).

The letter begins by introducing Ezra and his mission (Ezra 7:12–16). It follows with two sets of instructions regarding provisions for the temple: one for Ezra (7:17–20) and one (as a letter embedded in this letter) for the treasurers of the province Across-the-River (7:21–24). Details dominate the central part of the letter and reflect specific Judean terminology and ideology. Extravagant provisions challenge credibility and contribute to the view that the letter is either an embellishment of a core letter or total fabrication. Cultic matters fall within Ezra's responsibility as priest, but he will not be featured in cultic roles. In closing (7:25–26), Artaxerxes' letter places the law of Ezra's God on the same footing as Persian royal law, backed by the Persian Empire.

The letter expresses three major themes of EN: (1) Emphasis on the people, beginning with the permission of all (Ezra 7:13) to go to Jerusalem and ending with teaching the entire people (7:25); (2) emphasis on the house of God at the center of the letter,

with financial provision for sacrifices; (3) the authority of texts, namely, this letter and the law.

The letter includes credible and incredible elements. The subsidy for Ezra's mission (Ezra 7:22) strains credibility, but other elements fit Persian-period conventions. Scholarly discussions focus on (1) the authenticity, reliability, and date of the letter (ranging between those who consider it a forgery and those who regard it as the most authentic Aramaic document in the book); (2) Ezra's mission and authority; and (3) the "law" of Ezra's God and its relation to the king's law (7:26) and to Persian imperial policies.

Nothing in the letter suggests an awareness that Artaxerxes earlier prohibited building of the temple (Ezra 4:17–23).

The structure of Ezra 7:11–26 is as follows:

1. Introduction (7:11)
2. The letter (in Aramaic) (7:12–26)
    a. Address (7:12)
    b. Ezra's basic commission (7:13–16)
        (1) Permission for Judeans to go up with Ezra (7:13)
        (2) Supervision according to the law (7:14)
        (3) Bringing contributions for God's house in Jerusalem (7:15–16)
            (a) From the Achaemenid rulers (7:15)
            (b) From diaspora Judeans (7:16)
    c. Instructions for provisions for God's house in Jerusalem (7:17–24)
        (1) Instructions to Ezra (7:17–20)
        (2) Instructions to provincial treasurers (7:21–24)
            (a) Provisions (7:21–23)
            (b) Tax exemptions (7:24)
    d. Instructions to Ezra regarding the law (7:25–26)
        (1) To appoint judges and teachers (7:25)
        (2) Penalties for disobedient subjects (7:26)

Notes

7:11. *And this is a copy of the document that the king, Artaxerxes, gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, scribe of the words of YHWH's commandments.* A letter like this one in the world of the Persian Empire serves as a permit, demonstrating a person's right to act in accordance with the stated mission. See, for example, Arsames' authorizing letter from Elephantine (*TAD* A 6.9). The Hebrew introduction, with some Persian loan words, leads to a letter from the king in Aramaic.

This editorial introduction resembles notations in other ancient correspondence, placed at the top of a document or on its outside. Beyond simply identifying the parties and subject matter, it highlights Ezra's full, formal titles: priest and scribe.

copy of the document. See Notes at Ezra 4:23.

Artaxerxes. See Notes at Ezra 7:1.

the priest. Ezra's pedigree (Ezra 7:1–6) delineated his priestly qualifications, but without this title. Fried (2014, 30) suspects that the historical Ezra may not have been a priest. Indeed, Ezra does not engage in typical cultic activities associated with priests. But within a Judean framework of authority, his priestly entitlement is of paramount importance because priests were custodians of the *torah* (e.g., Deut 31:9 and Hag 2:11).

scribe, scribe of. The repetition of the root *s.p.r.,* "scribe," in the MT underscores the importance of that aspect of Ezra's credentials. The LXX, however, translates the second *s.p.r.* as *bibliou,* pointing the same consonants differently. Drawing upon the meaning *s.p.r.* as "enumerator," Malbim considers Ezra one who counts the words of the *torah* (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 158–59). Scholars like Blenkinsopp (1988), who omit the repetition, obscure the emphasis in Ezra 7:11.

the words of YHWH's commandments and his laws concerning Israel. This phrase resembles Ezra 7:6, hence equating words and commandments with the *torah.* Deuteronomy begins with, "These are the words."

7:12. *Artaxerxes king of kings to Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven.* The letter itself, in Aramaic that begins here, is the last Aramaic document in EN. It largely conforms in style and vocabulary to Persian-period correspondence, although some linguistic forms are arguably later, leading to debates about its authenticity and date.

The address confirms Ezra's titles and credentials, with terminology that is meaningful in both Judean and Persian contexts. Like Ezra 7:11, it states explicitly Ezra's dual role, as priest and as scribe of God's teaching. It is not obvious why Blenkinsopp (2010, 156) considers these two missions as "*mutually incompatible*" (his italics). Priests' access to a *torah* required literacy, not only cultic training.

king of kings. Tyre and Sidon retained their own kings subservient to the Persian king, so the title is appropriate and used by Darius (Behistun Inscription, line 1).

priest. The LXX does not include this title. The term for priest here is an Aramaic transliteration of the Hebrew *kōhēn* (usually rendered *cohen* in English) rather than the Aramaic *kmrʾ*. This Hebraism suggests a Judean hand; the absence of the term in the LXX suggests a later addition.

scribe of the law of the God of heaven. While "law" in principle could refer to written or oral laws, "scribe" points to a written document, here recognized as divinely authoritative. First Esdras 8:9 has "the reader of the law of the Lord."

the law. Aramaic *dātāʾ*. Like the Greek *nomos* and Hebrew *torah, dātāʾ* carries a wide range of meaning as "law," "custom," or "tradition" as well as "edicts," written and oral. In Esther, the related Hebrew *dāt* designates both royal edicts (Esth 2:8) and Judean traditions (Esth 3:8). In late biblical Hebrew, *dāt* comes to mean "religion." References throughout Ezra 7, together with the accumulated associations with Ezra the scribe, combine to seal its meaning as an Aramaic equivalent for the book of the *torah.*

Fried (2014, 14–18), however, considers *dātāʾ*, "law," as strictly referring to the king's own law. She bases her view on the use of the term in Persian sources such as Darius's Behistun Inscription. The historical Ezra to whom this letter applies was charged (in her view) only with royal law (see further Notes at Ezra 7:14 and 7:26).

God of heaven. Ezra does not merely represent a local divinity but *the* God of heaven. This letter establishes Persian recognition of the divine source of Ezra's *dātāʾ*.

etc., and now. Aramaic *gĕmîr ûkĕʿenet,* the second word meaning "and now" (as Ezra 4:10, 11, 17). The meaning of *gĕmîr* is uncertain, suggesting the Hebrew *g.m.r.,* "to finish" or "to complete," implying, perhaps, that the reader will complete the formalities, like "etc." in English. The LXX replaces both words with "may the word and answer be completed." First Esdras 8:9 has only "greeting." These two different modifications in the LXX and 1 Esd 8:9 (each adding a salutation) indicate that *gĕmîr* was

not clearly understood. The NRSV has "'Peace.' And now . . ." The NJPS "and so forth" captures the same sense. J. A. Cook (2019, 101) chooses "perfect." Driver (1930, 283) suggests the meaning "devoted" and thinks it was abbreviated from further descriptions of Ezra (Williamson 1985, 96). In later rabbinic parlance, the expression "and *gomer,*" usually abbreviated, signals that the reader needs to complete the sentence or reference. This may be the sense here (see also Jerusalmi 1978, 38).

7:13. *An order has been issued by me that everyone in my kingdom from the people Israel and its priests and Levites who freely offers to go to Jerusalem with you, let him go.* Ezra's basic commission is now described. Permission to immigrate to Judah precedes all other privileges. Artaxerxes' letter implies "continuation of the policy of Cyrus" (Williamson 1985, 101).

An order has been issued by me. See Ezra 4:19. First Esdras 8:10 is more expansive: "In accordance with my gracious decision."

the people Israel and its priests and Levites. The letter underscores the communal nature of repatriating. Compare Ezra 1:5–6. The distinctly Judean categories of Israel, its priests, and Levites (in contrast to the generic "Judeans," *yĕhûdāyē',* in Ezra 4:12) indicate a Judean hand. First Esdras 8:10 has instead "the nation of the Judeans" and adds "and others in the kingdom."

freely offers. Forms of *n.d.b.,* "to offer freely" or "to volunteer," appear four times in four verses (Ezra 7:13–15). The verb is common in Hebrew (see "freely offered" in Notes at Ezra 2:68). Used in Aramaic only in Ezra 7, it represents one of several Hebraisms in the letter.

7:14. *For [you are] sent from before the king and his seven counselors to investigate concerning Yehud and Jerusalem with the law of your God that is in your hand.* While Ezra 7:10 synthesizes the task from Ezra's perspective (as defined by the narrator), the present verse formulates the official Persian agenda. The letter positions Ezra as the expert regarding the law of Israel's God.

For [you are]. Aramaic *kol qŏbēl dî.* This formulaic phrase, here and in Ezra 7:17, is analogous to the modern "whereas . . . be it resolved" (Jerusalmi 1978, 38).

seven counselors. Greek, biblical, and Persian sources mention seven advisors of the Persian kings. Herodotus repeatedly mentions "the seven" (*dikastai; Hist.* III.31, 71, 76, 83–87, etc.) who helped Darius seize the throne. Xenophon writes that Cyrus the Younger convened "the seven noblest men" to consult about a weighty decision (*Anab.* 1.6.4). The book of Esther has King Ahasuerus consult his seven (named) advisors for a response to Queen Vashti's disobedience (Esth 1:13–15); see also Dan 6:8. The Behistun Inscription lists the six men who had helped Darius gain the throne (lines 68–69). A group of seven as a fixed element of the Persian royal establishment may not have actually existed (Briant 2002, 128–39, esp. 137), but the tradition about it seems widespread.

The mention of counselors signals that Ezra's mission received wide-ranging approval from the royal administration and was not simply a personal favor driven by a whim. This contrasts with Nehemiah's commission, which was a personal concession to a favored courtier (Neh 2). First Esdras 8:11 has "just as I and the seven Friends who are my counselors have decided."

to investigate. The key verb, *b.q.r.,* has the range of meaning similar to the Hebrew *d.r.š.* (in Ezra 7:10 and 10:16). In Ezra 4–6 this Aramaic term refers to seeking verifica-

tion and corroboration by archival searches (Ezra 4:15, 19; 5:17; 6:1). The same sense fits Ezra's task: to establish correspondence between law and practice in Judah and Jerusalem. The NRSV's "to make inquiries" and NJPS's "regulate" also fit (cf. 5:17).

Steiner (2001), who focuses on the word *lbqr'* in Ezra 7:14 (in conjunction with the appointing of judges in Ezra 7:25), considers it a technical term parallel to the Greek *episkopos* in mid-fifth-century BCE Athens. According to Steiner, the term means "'to exercise the office of *mbqr,'* . . . and that was 'a temporary overseer' or 'visiting commissioner' sent by the Persian government to subject states to oversee major projects, like the setting up of a judicial system" (ibid., 628). But such specificity is probably not warranted when other Aramaic sections use the term in a more general sense (see the archival search in 4:15, 19; 5:17; 6:1).

Fried (2015a) translates the verb as "to act as the King's Ear." With Steiner, she compares it to the Greek *episkopos.* But Fried's interpretation is more specific. As eyes and ears of the king, such individuals were "independent of the satraps and other local authorities and reported any seditious speech or act directly to the king" (ibid., 316). It is striking, however, that Ezra nowhere reports to the king, even when he finds what he deems egregious violations. Fried (ibid., 316–18) is more helpful when linking the term to Qumran, where the *mĕbaqqēr* cross-examines community members (as in CD 9, 16–23; 1QS 6.12, 20).

Williamson (1985) considers the crisis about foreign wives in Ezra 9–10 to be an outgrowth of Ezra's mission as presented here. Possibly "the first duty Ezra had to perform was to determine precisely who it was that was to be subject to Jewish law. . . . Naturally, cases of mixed marriage would pose a particular difficulty here" (ibid., 101).

The author of 1 Esd 8:12 has *episkepsontai* in the third-person plural, thus assigning the task as it were to all who go up with Ezra, not just Ezra.

with the law of your God that is in your hand. In the present literary context, "the law of your God" alludes to the *torah* of Moses (Ezra 7:6) and the *torah* of God (7:10). Does the writer imply that Ezra actually brought with him a scroll of *torah* from Babylon? More likely, especially given Ezra's and EN's use of "hand" elsewhere (e.g., Ezra 7:28; 9:2, 11), the statement refers to something over which Ezra has authority, as Ezra 7:25 also indicates. Fried (2014, 18) notes that *dātā',* "law," in Persian sources never refers to a physical object. (For a different opinion, see, e.g., Grätz 2009, 3, who concludes that Ezra is bringing a physical *torah*.)

your God. Singular "your." The LXX has "their God." First Esdras 8:12 has "the law of the Lord," with no mention of "hand."

7:15. *and to bring silver and gold that the king and his counselors freely offered to the God of Israel.* The list of provisions for the mission begins here and extends to v. 24. Ezra 7:1–10 makes no mention of gifts, but Ezra 8 records their transfer. The letter specifies diverse sources of funding: royal and governmental subsidy (7:15) and contributions from others in Babylonia (7:16). It thereby combines the instructions in Cyrus's decree (1:1–4) and Cyrus's memorandum (6:3–5). While some royal benefaction is a realistic feature of Persian administration, contribution from royal advisors is not.

and to bring. The LXX has "and for the house of the Lord," possibly reading the MT *ûlĕhêbālâ,* "to bring," as *ûlĕhêkhālâ,* "and for the temple."

God of Israel. "Israel" here stands for the nation as a whole (see also Ezra 7:16) and points to distinctly Judean interests. It also probably reflects ideological competition for the political and religious legacy of the preexilic kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

whose dwelling is in Jerusalem. Ezra 7:11–26, like Cyrus's decree, affirms the centrality of Jerusalem as the abode of Israel's God, reflecting polemics against other shrines/temples (Samaria and perhaps Elephantine) in the fifth century BCE.

7:16. *and all silver and gold that you find in all of the province of Babylonia, with the free offering of the people and the priests who are freely offered to the house of their God that is in Jerusalem.* A blanket permission to gather unlimited quantities of silver and gold from Babylonia is hardly credible. Perhaps this echoes the "spoiling of the Egyptians" when escaping Hebrews are told to "borrow" vessels from Egyptian neighbors (Exod 3:22). Here and elsewhere, historical details combine with theological meanings to interpret the reconstruction in light of the larger story of Israel.

the province of Babylonia. Xerxes had made Babylonia (or Babylon) into a separate province as a result of rebellion. The majority of exiled Judeans ostensibly lived in this province.

the people and the priests. The use of the Hebraism *kāhănayyāʾ* for "priests" (see Notes at Ezra 7:13 and 6:9) and the subsequent reference to "their God" point to a Judean hand in the composition. The passage emphasizes the voluntary nature of contribution and repatriation. First Esdras omits "priests."

their God. The God in Jerusalem is also that of those who remain in diaspora. In Zech 6:9–15, the Babylonian Judean community sends expensive gifts to the cult in Jerusalem.

that is. Also possible, "who is."

7:17. *Because of this you will diligently buy with this silver young bulls, rams, lambs, and their meal offerings and their libations, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God that is in Jerusalem.* More than mere funding is at stake here. While the list parallels sacrificial items ordered by King Darius (Ezra 6:9–10), the beneficiaries have changed. With these resources, Judeans in diaspora are able to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem to "their God" (7:16), who is also "your [plural] God" (7:17). As Knoppers (2009b, 83) points out, diaspora Judeans become an integral part of Israel, connecting to Jerusalem's altar even while remaining in Babylon.

Because of this. The LXX has "and for everyone that arrives."

buy with this silver. EN reflects a "money economy." Compare the reference in Ezra 2:69 to coinage and "silver" as means of exchange. Funds collected in diaspora are to be converted into goods for temple worship, purchased on site. The LXX omits "silver."

buy. The LXX has "order him with this book."

young bulls, rams, lambs, and their meal offerings and their libations. These standard cultic provisions appear in Ezra 6:9 and reflect common ANE and biblical practices. See further Notes at Ezra 6:9.

offer them upon the altar. "Offer," from *q.r.b.,* "to bring near," a technical term for sacrifices in the Bible and used in Elephantine for specific Judean offerings at the temple (*TAD* A 4.7.25 // Cowley 30).

your God. Plural "your."

Jerusalem. Note the repetition in Ezra 7:15, 16, and 19. This emphasis both excludes and includes: it excludes competing temples, such as in Samaria or Elephantine,

but allows worshippers in diaspora to participate in Jerusalem's cult (on this type of cultic centralization, see also Knowles 2006).

7:18. *And whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold—in accordance with the will of your God—do.* The authority of Ezra and his fellow priests now extends to both legal matters (as in Ezra 7:14) and also fiscal and cultic ones. This grants a degree of autonomy to the cult (at the discretion of Ezra and his fellow priests), apart from Persian control (and in line with 6:6–7).

Financial transactions fall well within the scope of scribal expertise, in both Israel and the ANE. Scribes' literacy qualified them to supervise or record inventories.

7:19. *And the vessels that are given to you for the cult service of the house of your God, deliver fully before the God of Jerusalem.* The temple vessels symbolize continuity. Yet unlike the earlier vessels in Ezra 1:7–11, which originally belonged to the temple, the vessels in Artaxerxes' letter come from Judeans and non-Judeans. These vessels will gain sanctity through dedication to the house of God. Their transformation sheds light on the nature of the holy in EN as not inherent but ascribed (*pace* Hayes 2002; Harrington 2008). See further Notes at Ezra 8:28 and 9:2.

the vessels. First Esdras 8:17 has "the holy vessels of the Lord."

deliver fully. The LXX has *parados,* "deliver," as do the NJPS and NRSV. Alter (2018, 821) has "give over." The MT root, *š.l.m.,* elsewhere unambiguously means "to complete." The suggestion of a not yet fully finished house of God is important in EN. It explicates the proleptic summary that the house of God was built through the decree of all three Persian kings, including Artaxerxes (Ezra 6:14). Ezra, then, is to add some finishing touches to God's house.

the God of Jerusalem. This unusual title recurs in the Bible only in Sennacherib's mouth in 2 Chr 32:19. Possibly reflecting pagan understanding, it could also be a polemic against other religious centers such as Samaria. This is the last mention of Jerusalem in Artaxerxes' letter.

7:20. *And the rest of the necessities of the house of your God that will fall upon you to give, give from the treasury of the king.* This clause anticipates further work on the temple (Williamson 1985, 102). Additional expenses are envisioned and royal funds assigned. Royal subsidy for temples is not exceptional in the Persian period, but the almost unlimited generosity of the king challenges the letter's reliability (see, e.g., Grabbe 2006, 551–55). Ezra 7:21–24 circumscribes royal subsidy (esp. 7:22), making Artaxerxes' grant somewhat more credible. Once God's house is truly finished, the community itself will undertake provisions for the temple (Neh 10).

treasury. Royal treasuries contained gold and silver, precious objects, and documents (including account-keeping documents). See "royal treasure houses" in Notes at Ezra 5:17.

7:21 *And from me, King Artaxerxes, an order has been issued to all of the treasurers who are in Across-the-River that all that Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven, asks of you be done diligently.* This letter within a letter (Ezra 7:21–24) is addressed to provincial officials. It has two parts, both specific (in contrast to the open-ended stipulations earlier in the letter): first, a credit line for Ezra and his company (7:21–23); second, tax exemption for cult personnel (7:24). Royal contributions are to be accessed from revenue collected by local centers in the province.

the treasurers who are in Across-the-River. Major cult and political centers throughout the Persian Empire had treasuries for collection and distribution of provisions, including taxes. These would have included cities with established administration—Samaria, Sidon, Tyre, Ramat Rahel or Mizpah in Judah and Benjamin, and Jerusalem itself once it recovered (see "treasurer" in Notes at Ezra 1:8). Hundreds of Yehud seal impressions help identify such centers in Judah. The message to officials in the entire province Across-the-River protects the rights of the fledgling Judean community from harassment by neighbors (as reflected in Ezra 4).

Across-the-River. First Esdras 8:19 has "Syria and Phoenicia."

Ezra the priest, scribe of the law of the God of heaven. Ezra's full title, as in Ezra 7:12, provides a formal introduction to such officials. Identifying Ezra's law with that of God bestows on him greater honor and authority. First Esdras has "reader" instead of "scribe." "God" in 1 Esd 8:19 is "the most high God."

7:22. *up to one hundred talents of silver, and up to 100* kors *of wheat, and up to 100* baths *of wine, and up to 100* baths *of oil, and salt without accounting.* The quantities of provisions are exorbitant. Herodotus reports that the total annual tax levied from the fifth satrapy to which Judah belonged was 350 talents in Darius's time (*Hist.* III.91). Myers (1965a, 59) calculates Artaxerxes' provisions as 3.75 tons of silver, 650 bushels of wheat, and 607 gallons of oil; Clines (1984, 104) mentions 7,500 pounds of silver, 380 bushels of wheat, and 480 gallons of oil. Bertholet (cited by Williamson 1985, 103) calculated that the supply would cover temple worship for up to two years.

wheat . . . wine . . . oil . . . salt. Darius authorized these provisions (Ezra 6:9) but without limit. These standard cult offerings in the ancient world expressly appear in Leviticus and Numbers.

kors. One *kor* is estimated to be 50 US gallons.

baths. One *bath* is estimated to be around 5.8 US gallons.

salt without accounting. That is, without limit and requiring no documentation. Salt was integral to sacrificial offerings and the essential food preservative for millennia (see further "salt" in Notes at Ezra 4:14).

7:23. *All that is the order of the God of heaven let it be done with all haste for the house of the God of heaven, for why should there be wrath upon the kingdom of the king and his sons?* Worship on behalf of the foreign royal house is familiar from Darius's letter (Ezra 6:10). The present formulation implies that royal well-being depends on sacrifices mandated by Ezra's God. Officials who may seek to resist this extravagant command endanger the king.

God of heaven. This generic reference fits a wide range of religious communities in the ANE. Fried's (2015a, 312) translation as "god" is therefore apt. See Notes at Ezra 1:2.

with all haste. This Persian term is a *hapax legomenon.*

for why. The LXX has "lest" in lieu of "why." The idea of divine retaliation by Israel's God is surprising in a royal edict. Nevertheless, it serves here as a motivation for the king's benevolence (Japhet 2013, 195). First Esdras 8:21 has "the law of the most high God."

7:24. *And we are making it known to you concerning all the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim, and cult servants of this house of God, that it is not authorized to impose upon them toll-tax, and tribute and levy.* The letter

exempts all cult personnel from taxes (cf. Ezra 4:13). On taxes of temples in the Persian period, see Jursa 2009 and Waerzeggers 2010.

A remission of taxes does not itself discredit the authenticity of this provision (note some similar privileges in present-day Western societies, with special exemptions for church property and clergy). Kings periodically engaged in such acts of generosity, and forfeiting taxes from underdeveloped Judah would not have been a great financial loss to the empire. However, the full spectrum of Yahwistic cult officials in the list suggests a Judean hand.

Given the heavy taxation of the Persian Empire (see, e.g., Olmstead 1948, 289–301; Briant 2002, 800–821; and Kuhrt 2007, 669–729), exemptions would constitute a compelling incentive for certain groups to immigrate and revive a full range of cultic activities and personnel. In the small province of Judah, such exemptions would have created a serious socioeconomic imbalance. Herodotus (*Hist.* III.91) reports that provinces were taxed as a unit. Unless taxation itself was reduced, an increased burden to meet the quota of taxes would have shifted to the rest of the community.

we. The subject of the plural verb is unspecified. Williamson (1985, 96) has "Be it further known to you," using the impersonal form.

all the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the gatekeepers, and the Netinim, and cult servants. The structure and content of this list resemble the list of builders in Ezra 2:36–57 // Neh 7:39–60 and other cult personnel lists (Ezra 2:70; 7:7, 24; Neh 7:72; 10:29). Only the term "cult servants" differs from "Solomon's servants" in Ezra 2:55 // Neh 7:57.

Netinim. See Notes at Ezra 2:43.

cult servants. These are presumably other temple functionaries not already specified, equivalent to "Solomon's servants" in Ezra 2:55 // Neh 7:57 or a more general group.

it is not authorized to impose upon them. Tax exemptions were royal prerogatives. The Gadatas Inscription, for example, claims that Darius exempted the "sacred gardeners" of the Apollo temple in Asia Minor from paying tribute (Meiggs and Lewis 1980, 12). Whether the inscription is authentic (so Briant 2002, 491) or likely "a Roman-period forgery" (so Kuhrt 2007, 85), it reflects extrabiblical cultural perception that Persian monarchs issued such exemptions to far-flung sanctuaries. The Greek section of the Xanthus Inscription likewise mentions tax exemptions (IV.II.11–18; see Kuhrt 2007, 861).

not authorized. The term *šallîṭ* ("authorized" here) comes from the verb "to control" or "to rule." It appears in Hebrew in Neh 5:15.

toll-tax, and tribute and levy. See "toll-tax, tribute, and levy" in Notes at Ezra 4:13 for this trio of standard taxes. It is difficult to ignore the irony, intended or not: the adversaries in Ezra 4:13 warn Artaxerxes that should Jerusalem be built, these taxes will no longer be paid.

7:25. *And you Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges and let them judge all the people who are in Across-the-River.* Resuming an address to Ezra, the conclusion of Artaxerxes' letter explains the second element in Ezra 7:13–15: the law that is to be applied, this time described as divine wisdom. It defines Ezra's authority in judicial and "religious" affairs, both for Judah and beyond, as he is charged with appointing judges to implement the "wisdom" and

"law" of his God. Knoppers (2009b, 79) calls it "Ezra's Second Juridical Commission." Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 8 illustrate how Ezra interprets this mandate. Becking (2018, 116) observes that the judicial system is more than civil law but also involves following God's laws; the two realms overlapped in antiquity. Others argue for distinct channels of authority. In any case, Ezra is to establish a judicial infrastructure based on distinctly Judean traditions, thereby redistributing authority more broadly, away from a centralized foreign power.

Ezra is cast again like Moses. Not only does he bring the *torah,* but like Moses he is to appoint judges (Exod 18:25–26). In this he also follows Deuteronomic injunctions (see Deut 1:16–17, 16:18, 17:8–13).

the wisdom of your God that is in your hand. The parallel of "the wisdom" with the divine *dātāʾ* in Ezra 7:14 and the repetition of "the law of your God" in v. 26 below sufficiently confirm that the "wisdom" refers to the law whose scribe Ezra is. Law, *torah,* and wisdom are associated in Deut 4:6–8. One cannot exclude Ezra's personal wisdom or judgment (so Williamson 1985, 105).

magistrates and judges. The LXX has "scribes" in lieu of judges. Fried (2001) claims that the judges were to be royal judges and as such Persian (so too Pakkala 2004, 39) and that their installation meant a Persian court system. EN, however, refers to Judeans (see the Comments below). Not only textual evidence (the only judges in Ezra's story seem to be Judeans; see Ezra 10:14), but also historical realities undermine the likelihood that judges had to be Persian. Persia's small population constituted an elite. It is unlikely that the court would spare such personnel for service in a small backwater province such as Judah. The system, for practical reasons, had to rely on local resources. While an occasional Persian cannot be entirely discounted, the letter implies Judeans well-versed in Ezra's "law." In theory, they needed to be approved by imperial authorities. But Artaxerxes' letter transfers this authority to Ezra. Fried (2015a, 331–33) is right, however, to draw attention to the roles of judges in antiquity as distinct from reliance on written codes.

let them judge all the people who are in Across-the-River. Authority is now extended beyond Jerusalem and Judah and encompasses the diaspora as well. By itself, the verse implies jurisdiction over the entire province Across-the-River, an improbable policy, internally contradicting Ezra 7:14 where Ezra is specifically limited to "Judah and Jerusalem." As Williamson (1985, 103) notes, a number of scholars regard the verse as an insertion. Batten (1913, 307–8) uses this clause to discredit the entire letter. Others attempt to erase the conflict by supposing that only Judah and Jerusalem are truly intended (for rebuttal, see Williamson 1985, 103–4). Ackroyd (cited by Williamson 1985, 104) supposes that "the whole province becomes one community, all obedient to the law." As Knoppers (2009b, 80), however, observes, this statement refers to those who should know the law, namely, Judeans throughout the province, wherever they live. Both clauses that follow (about those who know the law and those who do not yet know it) qualify the scope of this statement. Ezra is not placed in charge of the entire province but authorized only to appoint Judean functionaries who will be applying Judean law among Judeans wherever they live in the province.

Other ethnic minorities in the Persian Empire also lived in accordance with their own laws (Eph'al 1978), presumably when these did not conflict with Persian interests. Something like this is envisaged under Darius in Udjahorresnet's mission to Egypt.

The significance of Ezra's commission is threefold: first, it formally grants authority to a non-Persian, legal body that Ezra is to appoint; second, it establishes God's law in Ezra's hand, presumably the *torah,* as the binding source of authority instead of the personal judgment of prominent Judean leaders; and third, it extends the authority of the *torah* to diaspora Judeans.

and whoever does not know, make it known to them. The verb "make it known" is plural, authorizing Ezra and those he appoints. First Esdras has the singular. Targeted are Judeans not yet familiar with their ancestral traditions. Kratz (2007) has argued that the so-called Passover papyrus from Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.1 // Cowley 21), dated to 419 BCE, exemplifies such lack of awareness of the *torah.* Conceivably, the stipulation in Ezra 7:25 also intends to inform non-Judeans, among whom Judeans live, about Judean practices. It is not a permission to proselytize or to impose Judean law upon non-Judeans. Nor need we suppose "that for the sake of harmony and justice within the Jewish communities all inhabitants, whether Jewish or not, should be under the same law" (Clines 1984, 105).

With this letter Ezra and Artaxerxes join in promoting Ezra's law as a public document, not a private one confined to priests.

7:26. *And anyone who does not do the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be done to him diligently, either death or uprooting or confiscation of property and imprisonment.* This conclusion of the king's letter also concludes the Aramaic portion of EN. The letter ends with a summary about the binding nature of law and (like other Persian-period documents) with threats to violators. The mention of the law of Ezra's God together with that of the king puts them on a par as equally authoritative; that Ezra's is listed first gives his God's law the edge.

the law of your God and the law of the king. King Artaxerxes proclaims that the law of Ezra's God and the law of the king are equally binding, both to be observed with rigor. To borrow the vocabulary of a later era, it establishes Israel's traditions as a licit religion in the empire. The exact relation between the two laws is more implicit than explicit. While most scholars concur that the reference to God's law is synonymous with the *torah* in Ezra 7:10, they continue to debate its relation to the king's law here at 7:26. Blenkinsopp (1988, 151) concludes that the sentence's construction, with *dātā',* "law," repeated, indicates that the two are to be differentiated. Fensham (1982, 108), to the contrary, concludes that Artaxerxes identifies his law with the law of God, translating, "the law of your God—it is also the law of the king" (102). Meyer (1896) and Blum (2002, 246–48), along with Frei (cited by Knoppers 2009b, 80), find here proof that Pentateuchal law has become royal law.

Knoppers (2009b, 80) points to several late biblical texts that maintain a difference between royal law and cultic law, for example, between the word of the king and the word of God in 2 Chr 19:11. He suggests that this difference would have been familiar to the audience for whom EN is written. It conforms as well to the legal system in the Achaemenid Empire, which differentiated between secular courts and temple courts (Magdalene 2009). As for the content of the king's law, there is no need to postulate a specific royal legal system here but rather royal law in general. This statement could also refer to the law(s) embedded in this letter. The Aramaic portion of the Xanthus Inscription is a case in point (dated ca. 337 BCE; Kuhrt 2007, 859–63). Line 19 refers to the stipulations in the inscription as *dātā';* the same sense is likely in Artaxerxes'

letter. Some ambiguity may be intended by the author of EN's letter. For EN, God's law finally reigns supreme. Its divine origin and continuing force come first. At the very least the two are compatible. At most, Israel's God stands as the power behind the scene, giving rise to the more narrowly conceived aims of foreign kings, who are always, knowingly or not, mere instruments of God. EN as a whole expresses this perspective, beginning with Cyrus's decree and the work of Israel's God (Ezra 1:1–2). First Esdras 8:24 has "the law of your God and of the *basilikon* [palace or kingdom]."

let judgment be done to him diligently, either death or uprooting or confiscation of property and imprisonment. Punishments for violating the law(s) appear in order of diminishing severity. The death penalty for disobedience to the *torah* is familiar from Deuteronomy. The other penalties, with the exception of imprisonment, can likewise be traced to the *torah.* However, the punishments most likely express a Persian not Judean penal system, backed by the arm of Persian might. Nonetheless, "it is unclear who within the king's realm is specifically responsible for enforcement and whether Ezra has any responsibility in enforcement at all" (Knoppers 2009b, 80). As we shall see, Ezra never exercises this power, even when encountering what he deems to be severe transgressions (Ezra 9:6–15). Eschewing these means illustrates Ezra's (and EN's) approach to royal commands for Judah.

Uprooting. This could suggest banishment as uprooting (so Pseudo Rashi). Many scholars prefer "corporal punishment" on the basis of the Persian word *sraršyā,* a well-known term for corporal punishment in the Persian Empire (see Rundgren 1957; also Falk 1959, cited by Fensham 1982, 108). Fried (2015a, 330–31) therefore prefers "flogging." For "banishment," see also Williamson 1985, 97 n. 26b.

Artaxerxes' threats conclude the Aramaic section in Ezra and EN as a whole. Ezra's thankful response follows in Hebrew.

Comments

In introducing Ezra, Artaxerxes' letter supplements the narrator's glowing introduction with King Artaxerxes' praise, heaping extraordinary privileges on him. Artaxerxes appoints Ezra to oversee Judah and Jerusalem according to the *dātā',* or law, in his hand (Ezra 7:14). The king guarantees provisions for the cult (7:15–24) and authorizes Ezra to appoint judges and teach this *dātā'* of his God, subjecting violators to severe penalties (7:25–26). The letter reaffirms the legitimacy of Jerusalem's temple and provides funding for it, as did King Cyrus (6:2–5) and Darius (6:8–10). Some conclude that Ezra 7:21–24 or 25–26 is a later insertion to the letter (Kratz 2005, 68–86; Pakkala 2004, 37–70). While this conclusion is reasonable, the current arrangement suits well the overarching perspective of EN: temple and *torah* stand together, with *torah*/law (7:13–14, 25–26) framing the temple.

I review three major issues in modern scholarly discussions of the letter: the authenticity, reliability, and date of the letter; Ezra's mission and the scope of his authority; and the "law" of Ezra's God and its relation to the king's law and to Persian imperial policies. I then turn to the purposes of Artaxerxes' letter in EN.

The Authenticity, Reliability, and Date of the Letter

EN claims unambiguously that royal authorization was a response to Ezra's request (Ezra 7:6). Presumably, that request accounts for the king's specifications. But questions

of historicity and reliability have dominated scholarly attention to Artaxerxes' letter. Battle lines were drawn in 1896–1897 when Meyer and Wellhausen crossed pens, Meyer defending authenticity and Wellhausen discrediting it (for a review of the exchanges between Meyer and Wellhausen, see Blenkinsopp 2010, 151–52). Those who dismiss authenticity include Torrey (1896; 1910), who denies the historicity of Ezra himself, and Batten (1913).

Current discussions focus on the letter's reliability, with "reliable" meaning that, even if edited or composed by a later hand, "the letter . . . reflects the actual commands and disposition of the Persian monarch" (Janzen 2000, 623). Janzen concludes that the letter is neither authentic nor reliable (but accepts the historicity of Ezra and his activities). For Batten (1913, 308), the discrepancy between the letter and Ezra's subsequent actions exposes the letter as forgery.

Pakkala (2004, 46–48) considers the letter filled with "Jewish religious elements." He judges that it lacks essential elements of official correspondence, offers no clear reason why the Achaemenid king would have involved himself in local affairs, and provides for a fantastical donation to the temple.

Kratz (2005, 49–86, esp. 73–76) finds an authentic core in Ezra 7:21–22 but considers the rest of the material legendary. Wright (2005, 86–94) argues that the Ezra tradition is a response to the Nehemiah Memoir: like the letters in Ezra 4 and 7, it aims to prioritize the reconstruction of the temple and cult vis-à-vis the construction of the walls (ibid., 44).

While the list of those who deny the letter's reliability is substantial, so too is that of those who accept some basic reliability, suggesting a core or an actual message from the Persian court even though one that is embellished and expanded. Early supporters include Rudolph (1949, 73–77) and Kellermann (1967, 60–62).

In der Smitten (1973, 6–66) considers it authentic and, indeed, the only historical element in the Ezra narrative, the rest being a midrash to discredit Nehemiah. For Williamson (1985, 98; 2008), the use of imperial Aramaic and the general similarity to other known Persian policies toward subject peoples support the letter's essential reliability. He notes that new data concerning "the language and epistolary form of the documents" permit us to suppose that some authentic Persian-period documents underlie EN's Aramaic material (Williamson 2008, 41).

Grabbe (2006, 551–55) examines orthography, epistolary formulae, and other documents from the era, as well as Persian policy toward temples and cults. He concludes (while generally skeptical of the authenticity of all the Aramaic documents in EN) that this letter of Artaxerxes has more authentic material and credibility than all but the letter of Tattenai.

Blenkinsopp (2010, 155), however, who largely concurs with Grabbe, concludes that "if Ezra's mission is historical, and if it was officially authorized, which is entirely plausible, the authorization cannot very well have been issued in the terms of the document before us." Fried (2015a, 331) considers certain portions of the letter authentic (7:14, 19–21, and 25–26) since nothing in them "prevents them from stemming from the Persian king."

As is generally recognized, written authorization would have had to be issued if Ezra and his mission were historical. Some elements in the letter reflect what such an authorization would have had to include; others, like the extensive benefits, suggest

embellishment. The acclaimed fifth-century BCE historian Thucydides can shed some light on this issue by indicating how ancient writers worked. He explains that in the speeches he presents, he made speakers say what was "demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said" (*Pelop.* I.22). Something of this sort can be postulated for the letter here as well.

Gunneweg (1985, 140–43) implies a similar position. He credits EN's author with writing this letter; but he also adds that the letter is historically "true," even if it had never existed apart from Ezra 7, in that it accurately represents an essential reality about Jewish life under Persia.

Ezra's Mission and the Scope of His Authority

What was Ezra's mission according to Artaxerxes' letter if Ezra in fact existed? Blenkinsopp (1987) compares Ezra's appointment with that of Udjahorresnet, who was sent by Darius to Egypt. Grabbe (2004, 295–97) disagrees, noting the dissimilarities between Persian-period Judah and Egypt. He argues that Egypt was of special significance to the empire, which was not the case with Judah or Yehud (see also Janzen 2000).

Steiner (2001) focuses extensively on the word *lbqr'* in Ezra 7:14 and on the appointing of judges in 7:25. He finds helpful parallels in the technical usages of the Greek term *episkopos* in mid-fifth-century BCE Athens. According to Steiner, the term designated "'a temporary overseer' or 'visiting commissioner' sent by the Persian government to subject states to oversee major projects, like the setting up of a judicial system" (ibid., 628). Like Schaeder (1934), then, Steiner identifies Ezra's definitive niche within a comprehensive Persian imperial bureaucracy. But other Aramaic sections use the verb *b.q.r.* in a more general sense for archival research (see Ezra 4:15, 19; 5:17).

Fried (2014, 14) argues that Ezra was charged to function as the "king's ear"; he was "to humble any governor who grew rebellious, to see to it that taxes were paid," etc., and to report directly to the king. She claims that Ezra, who was a scribe but not a priest, was commissioned to appoint royal judges to administer the province in conformity with Persian law, not the *torah* (Fried 2001; 2015a, 228). It should be noted, however, that Ezra in EN does none of these things.

Knoppers (2009b) disagrees with Fried. Ezra's role is "not to assign Persian judges to administer royal Persian law . . . , but to pick adjudicators for all those acquainted with the laws of Ezra's God" (ibid. 80; *pace* Fried 2001, 63–89; Pakkala 2004, 39). According to the king's letter, Knoppers holds, Ezra is to teach these laws to all those "who should be acquainted with Yahwistic laws, but are, for some reason, ignorant" (ibid.). This includes extending the relevance of the *torah* to the wider Judean community, including the diaspora, with Jerusalem as the cultic center.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Ezra received authorization to introduce and apply Judean law and traditions. Without fixing Ezra's historical position in any specific Achaemenid administrative niche, one can nevertheless see such a mission as congruent with Persian imperial policies even though many of the privileges in the letter exceed plausibility.

"THE LAW" (*DĀTĀʾ*) OF EZRA'S GOD AND ITS RELATION TO THE KING'S LAW AND TO PERSIAN IMPERIAL POLICIES

Statements such as "the law [*dātāʾ*] of your God" (Ezra 7:14) and the demand to obey "the law [*dātāʾ*] of your God and the law [*dātāʾ*] of the king" (7:26) have prompted debates about Ezra's law and mission in relation to Persian imperial policies. Fried (2001; 2014, 14–18) maintains that the historical Ezra brought with him Persian laws that needed to be implemented under the supervision of Persian judges. But her view is an exception to the widespread and more compelling agreement that Ezra was to apply some distinct Judean traditions. Most scholars concur that "the law of your God" implies "the *torah*" of Ezra 7:6 and 7:10 (see Knoppers 2009b, 79). This is unquestionably the case if the letter is primarily the work of a Judean author, either modifying a royal letter or composing it.

Frei's work (1995, 2001) on Persian imperial authorization triggered debates about imperial influence. Frei (2001, 12) asks, "Are 'the law of your God' and 'the law of the king' identical?" According to Frei, "laws were made in the emperor's court" (ibid., 35), but royal input may have been limited. Advisors proposed relevant norms to the king, who then approved ("authorized") them. Individuals could initiate or influence the laws directly or via trusted middlemen; the laws, then, were "written down as the edict of the addressed ruler and thus authorized" (ibid., 35). Through imperial authorization, "the legal norms of a local body with subordinate status are elevated to the status of imperial legislation and so enjoyed corresponding authority" (ibid., 38).

Frei's analysis exemplifies a pattern in which royal authorization is bestowed upon local initiative. The Xanthus Inscription, which depicts special arrangements for the temple in Lycia, explicitly reports that the community itself set the terms for the management of the temple. The Persian satrap then authorized it. This inscription even shows, Frei (2001, 40) observes, "that the satrap adopted the curses of the local agreement and apparently issued them in his own name." Evidently, Persian authorization incorporated non-Persian, local language and curses (on the Xanthus Inscription, dated ca. 337 BCE, see Kuhrt 2007, 859–63). The Elephantine documents also show that a community sought Persian authorization, not vice versa (see *TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30). So too Udjahorresnet, who reports that he informed King Darius of steps needed (see, e.g., line 30). While one must guard against taking at face value self-promotion and propaganda in this and other inscriptions (Kuhrt 2007, 118), the consistency with which such dynamics appear, and the logic that they display, support the conclusion that royal authorization typically followed local initiative in cult-related matters.

Jones (2018, 171) rightly observes that "the sole comparative source for the idea that the Persians codified local written laws for administrative use comes from a fragmentary text on the *verso* of the Demotic Chronicle (BN 215 C.6–16) in which Darius summons the cultural elites of Egypt to Susa to compile and codify Egyptian legal customs." But as Redford (2001) points out, Darius's authorization served only to inform the Persians of existing Egyptian traditions, not to prescribe or form them. There is no evidence that the Persians concerned themselves with the content of Ezra's *torah*.

In sum, one can conclude that a Persian imperial court had to authorize a law that Ezra was to teach. This does not imply that the law itself is Persian or that its content

was shaped by Persian authorities. Nor does it mean that the Persian law and Ezra's are the same (*pace* Fensham 1982, 108). Persian authority lends support to the law that Ezra brings and attests that this law does not conflict with royal vested interest (Knoppers 2009b, 80). The two legal systems are in force. Ezra is responsible for the one, with an understanding that it does not conflict with the other.

Moreover, the "king's law" could refer to the letter itself, not to some other, general body of legislation. Such use of the term *dātāʾ* is found in the Aramaic version of the Xanthus Inscription (spelled *d.t.h.* in line 19; see also Kuhrt 2007). As Fried (2014, 17) also concludes on this point, the *dātāʾ* of the king "refers to the king's word, his orders and decrees, not to a law code, written or unwritten, neither of which existed in the Persian Empire" (for more on Ezra's *torah,* see the Comments at Ezra 7:1–10).

the purposes of artaxerxes' letter in en

Artaxerxes' letter in Ezra 7 confirms Ezra's authority and that of the *torah,* along with the centrality of Jerusalem as God's house. But as scholars have noted, there is a disjunction between the mission that the letter authorizes and Ezra's conduct in the chapters that follow.

Batten (1913, 308) writes, "Ezra is here clothed with all the power of the Persian king in the whole of Syria, yet he was unable to effect a single divorce except by a pathetic appeal to the people" (see also Pakkala 2004, 40–56). Janzen (2000, 643) concludes that since the letter is not reliable, "Attempting to reconcile his [Ezra's] actions in the narrative with the letter's description of his duties is an unnecessary and unhelpful task."

But the tension in the book that Batten rightly highlights should not be dismissed so lightly. It is in fact crucial because it articulates EN's strategy for life under Persian rule. In the episode about intermarriages, Ezra resorts to appeal and to a communal mandate, not to Persian imperial authority, which he possesses (see Eskenazi 1988a, 127–54). This striking tension between the letter and Ezra's actions expresses EN's political and social agenda: it models constructing a Judean framework within the imperial structures, yet without recourse to Persian tools. It also illustrates Ezra's mode of teaching *torah.*

Jones (2018, 158) examines Artaxerxes' letter through the lens of postcolonial studies, maintaining that with this letter, EN "strategically mimics imperial discourse by assuming that propagandistic Persian rhetoric to Babylon and Egypt should also naturally apply to Yehud despite its peripheral status." The letter places the book's ideology in the mouth of Persia's kings, claiming that "imperial domination is Yahweh's will" (ibid., 173). As such, "Ezra 7 is a work of accommodationism, an attempt to make the best of imperial domination by using the empire's own ideals to promote indigenous interests" (ibid., 180).

Taken as a whole, however, EN uses Ezra and Artaxerxes's letter also to articulate resistance to imperial intrusion. The disjunction between what the letter authorizes and what Ezra does and does not do exemplifies this. Whereas Batten, Janzen, and Pakkala use this disjunction to deny the letter's reliability or Ezra's historicity, the disjunction illustrates EN's strategies of resistance. Ezra never uses his royal credentials. In the unfolding narrative he acts only when asked to do so by the Judeans. He relies *only* on the authority of God. With this pattern, self-determination holds sway within the structure

of accommodation and recognition of Persia's authority. The *torah* provides indigenous criteria for communal life.

3. EZRA'S RESPONSE TO ARTAXERXES' LETTER (7:27–28)

7 [27]Blessed is YHWH, the God of our fathers, who gave such as this in the heart of the king to adorn the house of YHWH which is in Jerusalem; [28]and toward me inclined generous love before the king and his counselors and all the king's mighty officers; and I was strengthened in accordance with the hand of YHWH my God upon me, and I gathered from Israel heads to go up with me.

Introduction

At long last, Ezra himself "speaks." His first-person account, the so-called Ezra Memoir (Ezra 7:27–9:15), begins with praise. The third-person perspective on Ezra's activities in Jerusalem resumes in Ezra 10:1–44 and Nehemiah 8.

This passage introduces Ezra through his own words, offering his interpretation of the letter and his mission. The verses connect tightly with Ezra 8:1–14, which follows. Ezra's first words establish God as the source of the king's generosity and then turn to the companions who share his mission.

Notes

7:27. *Blessed is YHWH, the God of our fathers, who gave such as this in the heart of the king to adorn the house of YHWH which is in Jerusalem.* An abrupt change of language (to Hebrew from Aramaic) and spokesperson (to Ezra, not king or narrator) allows the reader "to listen" to Ezra's interpretation of his mission. Ezra casts God as the power responsible for King Artaxerxes' generosity; his own work thereby reflects the goals of Israel's God and only secondarily that of the Persian king.

Ezra puts "we" or "our" before "I" or "my" (in contrast to Nehemiah, whose "I" dominates his writing), gratefully discerning God's hand in all events. His benediction contains classical elements of praise in the Bible (Becking 2018, 117).

First Esdras 8:25 improves the transition by introducing this section with, "Then Ezra the scribe said." Josephus (unlike EN and 1 Esdras) transposes the Ezra Memoir into a third-person account, recording here that Ezra was "overcome with joy" (*Ant.* XI.v.2 // XI.131).

God of our fathers. Ezra's initial reference links with the larger tradition. Only Ezra in EN refers to God this way (see also Ezra 8:28 and 10:11).

to adorn the house of YHWH. By describing what the king has granted as glorifying YHWH's house (without mention of the *torah*), Ezra subsumes the entire mission under care for YHWH's house and thereby as an extension of Cyrus's decree as well.

to adorn. The LXX has *doxasai,* "extol," "exalt," or "beautify," which accounts for the common translation of "glorify" (see the NRSV). The infrequent verb, most common in Isaiah, typically describes honor bestowed upon God's temple (as in Isa 60:13). Grammatically, either king or God adorns the house. The MT notation favors God as adorning by directing the king's heart. In this sense, the statement also echoes the divine initiative in Ezra 1:1–4.

7:28. *And toward me inclined generous love before the king and his counselors and all the king's mighty officers.* The Persian court is but a vehicle for Israel's God, much as in Isa 45:1–7. According to Ezra, God's hand empowers him, not Persian authorities.

generous love. Heb. *ḥesed,* a term without an adequate English equivalent, often translated as "lovingkindness," "faithfulness," or "steadfast love" (NRSV). It refers in the Bible to generosity beyond the call of duty. See Notes at Ezra 3:11. First Esdras 8:26 has instead "honored me."

before the king and his counselors. See Notes at Ezra 7:14. First Esdras 8:26 adds "friends."

the king's mighty officers. Officers or chiefs, Heb. *śārîm,* are high officials, sometimes translated as "princes," "leaders," or "rulers." The LXX has "chiefs."

I was strengthened. A reflexive form that could also mean "I strengthened myself."

hand of YHWH my God. The LXX adds "good" to "hand." The reference echoes the narrator's report (Ezra 7:6) affirming Ezra as an agent of divine grace. Nehemiah also credits God's hand upon him (Neh 2:18), but the narrator never confirms that point. First Esdras 8:27 uses "help" instead.

and I gathered from Israel heads to go up with me. Ezra promptly includes the community and takes steps to go up to Jerusalem (note the prompt response to Cyrus in Ezra 1:5–6). In this he follows the very first mandate of King Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:13. This initial statement illustrates Ezra's commitment to including others, a theme central to Ezra's work of building community.

from Israel. Israel is now composed of those still in diaspora. The list that follows (Ezra 8:1–14) identifies the various groups. Calling those in exile "Israel" plays a role in the construction of identity that EN articulates.

heads. EN characteristically mentions "heads," usually of families (*ʾābhôt,* lit. "fathers") or other groups (see, e.g., Ezra 1:5), as key actors in the return and reconstruction. EN's "democratization" tendencies are embedded in a social structure in which men typically head families and represent them. The absence of a qualifying noun (such as "families" or "houses") here is unusual for EN. First Esdras 8:27 has only "men."

Comments

Ezra's response in Ezra 7:27–28 introduces the so-called Ezra Memoir that extends to Ezra 9:15. It is differentiated from the rest of the Ezra narrative in Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8 by being a first-person account presented as Ezra's words.

The Ezra Memoir

Early readers supposed Ezra to be the actual author of the memoir and a reliable eyewitness. Torrey (1896), however, argued that the entire Ezra narrative is fiction composed by the Chronicler. The memoir section, Torrey claimed, was the Chronicler's imitation of the authentic Nehemiah Memoir (ibid., 29).

Kapelrud (1944, 95), who examined the relation between the Ezra Memoir (Ezra 7:27–9:15) and the third-person account in the Ezra narrative, concluded that both came "from the same hand." Mowinckel (1961, esp. 213–16) explained the shifts between the "I" (7:27–9:15) and the "he" sections as a convention in the ancient world, evident in Daniel and Ahikar. One can add that the fifth-century BCE historian

Thucydides (*Pelop.* 1.1.20–22, 2.70) and the second-century BCE Polybius (*Hist.* 1.1.3, 1.20.1, 1.21.1) also exemplify such shifts. Polybius even explains his purpose: to add variety (36.12). For a review of such historians' stylistic features and how these affect reading EN, see Eskenazi 2010.

Most twentieth-century scholars considered the basic narrative reliable even when supposing with Kapelrud and Mowinckel a single hand for the first- and third-person narratives (admittedly with some additions, such as Artaxerxes' letter and lists, e.g., Ezra 8:1–14). Mowinckel (1961) held that it was written by a follower of Ezra around 370 BCE. Williamson (1985, xxix) supposes that an editor rewrote what originally was a first-person account, possibly by Ezra. Yoo (2017, 1–4) also affirms an underlying source. Both Williamson and Yoo call the entire Ezra narrative the "Ezra Memoir." Japhet (2019, 181–92) supposes one anonymous writer composing shortly after Ezra's mission. All three grant a high degree of historical reliability to much of the material.

Blenkinsopp (1988, 44) also regards the Ezra narrative as based on an earlier, first-person account, possibly by Ezra himself, but finds the Chronicler's hand in EN. Fried (2015a, 290) also considers an Ezra source by Ezra or a subordinate. Most scholars consider Nehemiah 8 as part of the source, moved to a new location by the editor responsible for combining the Ezra and Nehemiah material.

Grabbe (1998, 152–53), however, considers the Ezra Memoir self-contradictory: the first-person section is either "mainly an invention or Ezra wrote it but deceived us, or it had been worked by a later editor." For Becking (2018, 6), Ezra 7–10 is pseudepigrapha about bogus history, with Ezra as fictional protagonist.

Grabbe (1998, 155) notes a current scholarly trend to discount the authenticity of the Ezra Memoir coupled with the widespread consensus that accepts the authenticity of the Nehemiah Memoir. Even skeptical scholars like Gunneweg (1987, 176–80) trust the Nehemiah Memoir's essential reliability. The main argument for that memoir's acceptance "is the very subjective and personal one that the NM [Nehemiah Memoir] strikes the reader as a real outpouring" (Grabbe 1998, 155). Grabbe himself treats most of the Nehemiah Memoir as reliable.

Yet the general trust in the historicity of the Nehemiah Memoir remains striking, given the lack of evidence, especially since Nehemiah's wall, his crowning achievement in the memoir, has yet to be found. References to Nehemiah in Ben Sira 49:13 and 2 Macc 1:18–36 and 2:13, used to support his historicity, can hardly confirm it anymore than they can confirm the historicity of Abraham or Moses. They are no more decisive as proof than 1 and 2 Esdras are for the historicity of Ezra. The reliability of both Ezra and Nehemiah, in my view, is of equal footing, containing some genuine ancient sources and significant reshaping and accretions.

Wright (2005, 88–93), while recognizing an "Ezra source" in the Ezra Memoir, agrees with Noth (1967, 125ff., 145ff. [originally published 1943]), Kellermann (1967, 56ff.), In der Smitten (1973, 6–66), Gunneweg (1985, 121–27), and Kratz (2005, 68–83) that the Ezra Memoir was created in response to the Nehemiah Memoir. He notes the gradual literary development of both memoirs, with some influences in both directions. Wright (2005, 92–93) suggests that the Ezra Memoir was written as a bridge between Ezra 1–6 and the account of Nehemiah to underscore themes such as the support for the temple and the *gôlâ* repatriation, which the Nehemiah Memoir ignores (Pakkala 2004 likewise identifies complex redactional stages). Dor (2003, 2006) argues that the

Ezra narrative, specifically Ezra 9–10, is composed of various sources not stemming from the same hand. She uses these to reconstruct a history of the events.

In the discussion that follows, "Ezra Memoir" refers only to the first-person narrative (Ezra 7:27–9:15), which I regard as part of the larger source that originally included most of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemiah 8. Unlike Grabbe, I consider most of the events plausible (albeit shaped to convey certain messages), even if not provable. The commentary, however, focuses on the messages because these had historical influence and because they can be assessed with greater certitude than the compositional layers.

ezra's introduction of himself

The opening lines of the memoir first and foremost express Ezra's absolute reliance on God, not Persian authority. This precludes the theory that the Ezra Memoir was imagined as a report to the king. The Ezra Memoir begins and ends with an address to God (Ezra 7:27–28 and 9:6–15). The material in between consistently displays Ezra's commitment to the people and his focus on what today we call "community building." Ezra immediately gathers supporters (7:28) and lists them (8:1–14). He recruits Levites and thereby expands the scope of cult personnel beyond priestly monopoly (8:15–20). He commissions priests and Levites to undertake leadership roles (8:24–30). He ritually prepares, by a fast, the entire caravan for their undertaking (8:21–23). He agonizes over the fate of this community when he learns of certain violations (Ezra 9). These features not only combine to portray a leader constantly focused on community; they dramatically differentiate him from Nehemiah (who repeatedly highlights his personal achievements, such as "I built the wall" in Neh 6:1, when Neh 3 illustrates the work of others).

Most important, these details also model how to conduct Judean affairs by limiting reliance on Persian authority. Ezra 7:27–28 serves like the key at the beginning of a musical composition: it defines the chord or register with which the rest is to be played or interpreted. Persian kings may appear to be in charge, but they are no more than instruments of God to whom alone gratitude is due.

4. ezra's companions (8:1–14)

8 [1]And these are their paternal heads and their registration, the ones going up with me in the reign of Artaxerxes the king from Babylon. [2]Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel. Of the sons of David, Hattush. [3]Of the sons of Shecaniah. Of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him registered according to males: 150. [4]Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him the males: 200. [5]Of the sons of Shecaniah, son of Jehaziel, and with him the males: 300. [6]And of the sons of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him the males: 50. [7]And of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him the males: 70. [8]And of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him the males: 80. [9]Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him the males: 218. [10]And of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah, and with him the males: 160. [11]And of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him the males: 28. [12]And of the sons of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him the males: 110. [13]And of the sons of Adonikam, the last ones, and these are their names: Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them the males: 60. [14]And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with him the males: 70.

Introduction

Ezra immediately lists companions, an inclusion that reiterates his concern with community. The list begins with three individuals, followed by twelve groups, most of whom appear in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, for which Ezra's list may have been a source; they typically follow the same order. Most individuals' names include the theophoric element *yah* or *el.* The tantalizing reference to Hattush of David's line (Ezra 8:2) gives no further historical information. Shelomith may also relate to David (see Notes at Ezra 8:10)

The total number of men in the list is 1,511 or 1,513 (1,690 according to 1 Esdras; Blenkinsopp 1988, 160).

Similarities and differences between this list and those in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, and the seemingly intrusive nature of the list (Ezra 8:15 could naturally follow 7:28), have led to debates about authenticity and origin, without providing conclusive results.

Notes

8:1. *And these are their paternal heads and their registration, the ones going up with me in the reign of Artaxerxes the king from Babylon.* Ezra promptly introduces his companions. This list, either an actual list for an administrative purpose or an attempt to give such an impression, resembles other ancient lists, such as those from Elephantine (e.g., *TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22, *TAD* C 3.28 // Cowley 81). Registration of males typically pertained to taxes, the military, or other bureaucratic purposes. Here the names record people authorized to leave Babylon.

The list here reflects Artaxerxes' first point: gathering volunteers to go up (Ezra 7:12). Ezra introduces the community that implements the mission. The census for the journey in the wilderness in Numbers 1 may lurk in the background.

their paternal heads. Lit. "heads of their fathers" or "ancestors," without mention of household (*bayit*). The LXX adds "the leaders." See "paternal heads" in Notes at Ezra 1:5, where *ʾābhôt* stands for a household unit.

registration. The LXX omits this. It is usually translated as "genealogy" (see the NJPS, NRSV, and commentators), but see Notes at Ezra 2:62. Forms of this word, functioning as a formal mode of establishing identity and belonging, are confined in the Bible to EN and Chronicles. Procedures for establishing identity became a desideratum once mobility (through deportation, commerce, or military action) disrupted ancient social structures (Buster 2016). Presumably, a written document is envisioned (as at Ezra 2:62). Persian records for military service and taxation may underlie such lists. One might also consider the Athenian practice in which sons of two Athenian parents "are enrolled among the demesmen at the age of eighteen" (Aristotle, *Ath. pol.* 42), thus establishing their citizenship and membership.

reign of Artaxerxes the king from Babylon. The LXX has "king of Babylon," adjusting the awkward Hebrew syntax. Most translators (and 1 Esd 8:28) render "came with me from Babylon" (e.g., NJPS, NRSV, and others). Ezra's account establishes the legitimacy of this mission from Babylon by reference to the king who authorized it. Persian kings claimed to be kings of Babylon, for example, Cyrus in the Cyrus Cylinder (line 20).

8:2. *Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom. Of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel.* Two individuals, descendants of Aaron's grandson (Phinehas) and son (Ithamar), represent priests in

Ezra's list. Like Ezra (but unlike those in Ezra 8:3–14), they have no patronym; only their eponyms matter. In contrast to Ezra 2:36–39 // Neh 7:39–42, Ezra 8:2 records well-known priestly names from the first generations after Aaron. Blenkinsopp (1988, 161), like other scholars, mentions here the "increasing ascendancy of the Aaronites, an ascendancy now enshrined in the Pentateuch." If this is the case, however, it is odd that Aaron himself is not named. To Myers (1965a, 69), the list suggests a shift in the priority of priestly authority in Babylon between the time of Zerubbabel and Ezra. There may have been tension between priestly houses during the postexilic era (as in the Greco-Roman period, until the destruction of the temple in 70 CE), but EN sheds no light on those controversies, and this list shows no such tension. Unlike Ezekiel, EN does not identify one group as Zadokite. It does not identify Gershom and Daniel explicitly as Aaronides, and the two carry no visible authority once they arrive in Jerusalem. Ezra himself, also an Aaronide, shows deference to the Jerusalem priesthood (see Notes at Ezra 8:32–34) and does not exercise formal priestly duties at the temple (see Ezra 9–10 and Neh 8).

It is odd that only two priests are named, given Ezra 8:15–30, which mentions a larger group of priests (Ezra 8:24).

of Phinehas, Gershom. Phinehas, son of Aaron's third son Eleazar (Exod 6:25), receives special priestly authority in Num 25:1–15. First Chronicles 9:20 places a Phinehas in charge of certain tabernacle functionaries. Gershom is presumably the descendant of this Phinehas. His position first in the list supports this conclusion (Gershom is also the name of Moses's first son in Exod 2:22, listed as a Levite in 1 Chr 6:1). Gershom does not appear again in EN.

of Ithamar, Daniel. Ithamar is Aaron's fourth son, second (apparently also secondary) in the priestly line after Eleazar (Gershom's ancestor). Traditions about the Ithamar branch (outside the Pentateuch) are preserved only here in EN and in 1 Chr 24:1–5 (with only half as many members as Eleazar's branch). Daniel could be the priest signing the pledge in Neh 10:7 [ET 10:6], but nothing further is known about him. There is no implied link between this Daniel and the one in the book of Daniel. First Esdras 8:29 has Gamael instead.

of David, Hattush. Hattush is the only heir to the Davidic line that EN explicitly identifies as such (Zerubbabel, whom 1 Chr 3:19 links to David, lacks this identification in EN). Like Gershom and Daniel, Hattush appears without an immediate patronym. He is listed in 1 Chr 3:22 as a descendant of David via Zerubbabel and Shecaniah. However, that list is somewhat obscure as to how Shecaniah is related to Zerubbabel and hence the Davidic house, and thus is problematic. The Shecaniah who follows here is unattached, but see "Hattush son of Shecaniah" in 1 Esd 8:29. Blenkinsopp (1988, 162), who attributes EN and Chronicles to the same author, surmises that Hattush would have been a fourth-generation Davidic heir after Zerubbabel. A Hattush son of Hashabneiah in Neh 3:10 is among the builders of the wall. The Hattush among the signatories to the pledge (Neh 10:5) is probably a priest. Consequently, nothing further is known about this Davidic heir, either in EN or in other sources. His honorific position is inferred from his place in the list where although subsumed to the priests he precedes other Israelites. His position in the community cannot be determined. The brevity of the reference is astonishing and underscores EN's de-emphasis on the

Davidic house. Scholarly reconstructions of governors' lists for the era (on the basis of seals) do not mention him (see, e.g., Meyers and Meyers 1987, 14, chart 12). Meyers and Meyers (ibid.) estimate his birthdate as 495 BCE. If so, he could still be alive during Nehemiah's term as governor. Silence about his fate may be due to lack of information or the deliberate ideological slant of EN.

Pakkala (2004, 58) hypothesizes on the basis of 1 Chronicles 3 that this Hattush represents eight generations from Zerubbabel and estimates his birth at 380 BCE. Pakkala regards Hattush's name as a late, Hellenistic addition but does not suggest why an editor would insert an obscure heir to the Davidic line.

8:3. *of Shecaniah.* The MT notations separate Davidic Hattush from the sons of Shecaniah but list no one in connection with this Shecaniah. The descendants of Shecaniah appear as an anomaly in an otherwise regularly structured list. The LXX appends this name to the following family, "of the sons of Shecaniah and of the sons of Parosh," whereas 1 Esd 8:29 appends it to Hattush. In the MT it belongs to no specific group, has no offspring, and has no individual leader. This may reflect a textual corruption of Ezra 8:5, which also refers to Shecaniah, or confusion resulting from a tradition about David's house and some descendants of Shecaniah (see 1 Chr 3:1–5 and Notes to Ezra 8:5 below).

Later Jewish traditions likewise combine this Shecaniah with the Parosh family. Pseudo Rashi interprets Shecaniah and Parosh as one family, represented by Zechariah. For Pseudo Ibn Ezra, the irregularity aims to differentiate this group from the Shecaniah of Ezra 8:5. Only 1 Esdras solves the problem by listing Hattush as the son of Shecaniah (1 Esd 8:29).

Many English translations resolve the anomaly by relying on 1 Esdras, but the relation of Shecaniah to David's house remains problematic. As Williamson (1985, 108 n. 3b) observes, it is curious "that on three related occasions (1 Chr 3:22; Ezra 8:3 and 5) an uncorrected reading of the MT would imply that a son of Shecaniah has consistently been dropped from the list." All three references to Shecaniah require some emendation. Chronicles attempts to harmonize.

of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him registered according to males: 150. Ezra 2:3 // Neh 7:8 lists Parosh first under "Israel" and as one of the largest families. The 150 members here also constitute a large contingent.

Zechariah. A common postexilic name with the theophoric *yah* element (see, e.g., Elephantine in Cowley 8.7, 29; 9.17; and the prophet in Ezra 5 and the book of Zechariah). Without a more specific patronym this person cannot be identified with any of the several Zechariahs in EN.

registered. The verb is singular although the noun is plural. The NJPS and KJV use "genealogy," but the NRSV has "registered." The explicit reference to registering here applies implicitly to all the other entries.

males. No other list in EN specifies "males" (rather than "men"). But Numbers 1 registers Israelites as "males" when they are preparing for the march through the wilderness (see Num 1:2). EN here probably alludes to that census. Emphasis on "males" suggests military or tax purposes (the militant sense of the term is found in Josh 5:4: "the males, all the men of war"); however, 2 Chr 31:16 uses the term when referring to the priests.

8:4. *of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him the males: 200.* On Pahath-moab, see Notes at Ezra 2:6. This family is among the largest units in Ezra 2, as well as here. The name is unique to EN.

Eliehoenai. This name appears only here and in 1 Chr 26:3 (where it is applied to a different individual from Asaph's family). Several other people bear a slightly modified form of this name in EN and Chronicles (Ezra 10:22; Neh 12:41; 1 Chr 3:23, 24; 7:8). The theophoric element *el* appears in several names in this list (but not in Elephantine).

8:5. *of Shecaniah, son of Jehaziel, and with him the males: 300.* The listing for this largest group among Ezra's companions poses several problems. Two possible interpretations flow from the MT: (1) This verse, like Ezra 8:10, may be incomplete in omitting the name of the leader and referring only to his patronym. Shecaniah thus would be the group name, and the unnamed son of Jehaziel its leader. (2) The group name has been lost but the leader is Shecaniah son of Jehaziel. Although no family named Shecaniah appears elsewhere in EN (except for Ezra 8:3, which poses similar problems), several Jewish traditions prefer the first solution. The eighteenth-century Jewish commentator Mezudath David, for example, explains that the father was more important than the son, hence the omission of the son's name (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 168).

Both the LXX and 1 Esd 8:32 include here the name Zattu, and most translations follow this reading. In Ezra 2:8, the family of Zattu is large; the group in Ezra 8 is the largest listed.

Shecaniah. The name, meaning "Yah dwells" or "Yah will dwell," seems common in the postexilic era. Several different individuals in EN bear this name, with the most prominent among them in Ezra 10:2 (see also Neh 6:18). The name appears once in 1 Chr 3:21–22 in the Davidic genealogy and forms of it in 1 Chr 24:11 and 2 Chr 31:15. Coogan (1983, 255) observes that the frequency of the Hebrew root *s.k.n.,* "to live, to dwell," in postexilic sources "may also have been influenced in part by Babylonian contacts. Its use was in harmony with the developing priestly theology of the presence of God, but may also have been affected by ambiguity with the common Akkadian verb *šakānu.*"

8:6. *of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him the males: 50.* For Adin, see Notes at Ezra 2:15. First Esdras 8:32 has 250 men.

Ebed. Heb. *ʿebed,* meaning "servant" or "slave." This unusual name is not unique to EN (see also Judg 9:26).

Jonathan. The name, meaning "Yah gave," occurs again in priestly lists in EN, either with the theophoric element (Neh 12:18) or without it (Neh 12:35). It refers to other individuals in Chronicles and is used in Elephantine (see *TAD* B 4.4.21 // Cowley 2.21; *TAD* B 6.4.5 // Cowley 18.5). The most famous biblical Jonathan is Saul's son.

8:7. *of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him the males: 70.* For Elam, see Notes at Ezra 2:7. A Shecaniah from this group plays a significant role in the controversy over intermarriage (Ezra 10:2–4).

Jeshaiah. "Yah will save," the same name as the prophet Isaiah.

Athaliah. The best-known biblical Athaliah is a queen of Judah, notorious for having killed all contenders to the throne and reigning for six years (2 Kgs 11:1–20, 2 Chr 22:2–23:15). But the name appears also for a man in a list in 1 Chr 8:26.

8:8. *of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him the males: 80.* As a group's name, Shephatiah, "Yah will judge" or "Yah judges," is among the few (here and in Ezra 2 // Neh 7) bearing Yahwist names.

8:9. *of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him the males: 218.* In Ezra 2:6 // Neh 7:11, Joab is a subgroup of Pahath-moab. Here it constitutes a large independent group. In historical terms the difference suggests a branching out from an earlier unity. As to Jehiel, see Notes at Ezra 10:2. First Esdras 8:35 lists 212 members of this group.

8:10. *of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah, and with him the males: 160.* Like Ezra 8:5, this verse in the MT breaks the pattern and poses several problems. The LXX and 1 Esdras translate "of the sons of Bani, Shelomoth son of Josiphiah." Their translation renders the MT *bĕnê* both as "sons" and as the name Bani, which aligns the list somewhat with that in Ezra 2:10, where Shelomith does not appear but Bani does (followed by Bebai, Azgad and Adonikam, and Bivai, who follow Shelomith in Ezra 8). Williamson (1985, 206), Fried (2015a, 340), and Japhet (2019, 208) follow the LXX and 1 Esdras but retain the spelling of Shelomith, not the LXX Shelomoth, which is a distinctly male name.

The MT Ezra 8:10 leaves open two possibilities: (1) Shelomith could be a group's head, with the unnamed son of Josiphiah as its postexilic leader going up with Ezra; and (2) the group's name has been omitted and Shelomith son of Josiphiah is a leader. Traditional Jewish exegetes opt here for the first of the two (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 169; so too Pseudo Ibn Ezra). In all this Ezra 8:10 parallels 8:5 in terms of both problems and the solutions offered—traditional Jewish exegetes providing one and the Greek versions another.

That Shelomith is also known as a woman's name (typically, though not exclusively) adds complexity. First Chronicles 3:19 lists Shelomith as a daughter of Zerubbabel, hence of Davidic descent: "The son [*sic*] of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister; and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed, five" (1 Chr 3:19–20). Note also the mention of Hashubah, a variant of Hashub of Ezra 8:2, and the fact that 1 Chr 3:20–21 also mentions Shecaniah, who in Ezra 8:3 could be related to the Davidic house.

A Persian-period seal bearing the inscription "belonging to Shelomith, the handmaiden [*ʾāmâ*] of Elnathan the governor" has been interpreted as possibly disclosing "a significant postscript to the story of the fate of the house of David" (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 12; see also E. Meyers 1985). Extant seals indicate that Elnathan was governor perhaps between 510 and 410 BCE (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 14). Shelomith's title in the seal suggests a high office because "where royal officials bear the title *ʿebed,* 'servant,' or any such title, their wives bear the appellation *ʾāmâ* as an honorific title" (Avigad cited by Meyers and Meyers 1987, 13). Although Avigad was reluctant to match Shelomith of the seal with Zerubbabel's daughter, he nevertheless considered her a person of an elevated position (cited by Meyers and Meyers 1987, 12).

Meyers and Meyers (1987, 12–13) hypothesize that both references (1 Chr 3:19 and the seal) pertain to the same person: "Elnathan, as successor to Zerubbabel . . . married into or attached himself to the Davidic line, an act which would have strengthened his position as governor in the province of Yehud. Although there is no absolute proof, it seems highly unlikely that there would have been two women named Shelomith at this time, one the daughter of one governor, Zerubbabel, and another the *ʾāmâ* of another governor Elnathan."

The recurrence of certain names in the postexilic era makes it hazardous to match specific individuals in these lists (three men named Elnathan appear in Ezra 8:16; note

several women named Mibtahiah in the list of contributors in Elephantine, *TAD* C 3.15.83, 88, 106 // Cowley 22). Nevertheless, if a woman's name, Ezra 8:10 may represent another tradition about Shelomith daughter of Zerubbabel.

But Shelomith of Ezra 8:10 could also be a different high-ranking woman, or a man. Shelomith is a woman's name in Lev 24:11 and 1 Chr 3:19. It can also be a man's name in Chronicles, the only other book where the name appears (1 Chr 23:18; two instances of the K for Shelomoth are indicated as Shelomith in Q: 1 Chr 23:9 and 26:25). Shelomith in 2 Chr 11:20 is either a man or a woman. Biblical tradition is not unaware of women as clan heads. Aholibamah, daughter of Esau, is such a person (Gen 36:18). See Eskenazi 1992a and also Notes at Ezra 2:55 for references to women in EN.

with him. In the MT this refers to the son of Josiphiah, a descendant of Shelomith, not to Shelomith.

8:11. *of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him the males: 28.* This family and the next three follow the same order here as in Ezra 2:11–14 // Neh 7:16–19. It is not possible to determine whether the group's head Bebai is the same person as Zechariah's father (or grandfather). Cross (1975, 5) has argued for the practice of pappanomy in postexilic priestly families and Samarian administration, but little is known about such patterns among other families. This group is the smallest of those with Ezra (which would be expected if the clan is relatively young and began only with Bebai, Zechariah's father or grandfather).

Zechariah. First Esdras 8:34 has "Zeraiah."

8:12. *of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him the males: 110.* On Azgad, see Notes at Ezra 2:12, where it represents a major family.

Johanan son of Hakkatan. Johanan ("Yah was merciful") is a common Yahwistic name. It resembles that of the high priest Jehohanan in Jerusalem in 407 BCE, known from the Elephantine papyri (*TAD* A 4.7.18 // Cowley 30.18). See Notes at Ezra 10:6. Hakkatan, literally "the small one" or "the little one," may be a nickname. The LXX transliterates it as a name, Akatan. The term, however, could be an attempt to differentiate this person from another with the same name.

8:13. *of Adonikam, the last ones, and these are their names: Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them the males: 60.* Information about this family differs from the other entries in a number of ways, most obviously with the puzzling addition of the "last" or "later" ones, and for having three named representatives, not one.

Adonikam. On this Yahwistic name ("my Lord is rising") see Notes at Ezra 2:13.

the last ones. The LXX has *eschatoi.* The present entry is unique in that it identifies the following three different individuals and the group as "the last ones." Grammar allows several interpretations of the phrase: (1) the last ones to go after Ezra (so Pseudo Rashi), (2) "those who came later" (so the NRSV), and (3) "the last were . . ." (so the New English Bible). Williamson (1985, 108 n. 13a) plausibly suggests that this most likely means that no one from this family remained in Babylonia after this group came up with Ezra. The Jewish commentators *Mezudath David* and Malbim propose the same explanation (Y. Rabinowitz 1984, 169). Another possibility is "the last listed," indicating the conclusion of the list, with what follows being an insertion, possibly in order to reach the number twelve for clans.

Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah. All three names appear in Chronicles for different individuals. An Eliphelet in EN appears among the intermarried (Ezra 10:33). Shem-

aiah ("Yah hears" or "hear, Yah") is a common postexilic name, with several individuals in EN bearing it but none specifically linked to this one. See "Shemaiah" in Notes at Ezra 10:21.

with them the males: 60. First Esdras 8:39 lists 70.

8:14. *And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with him the males: 70.* This entry diverges slightly from the others in having two representatives.

Bigvai. On this important name, see Notes at Ezra 2:2a.

Uthai and Zabbud. In the MT this final entry in the list, uncharacteristically, mentions two individuals instead of a single father and son. The names lack theophoric elements. Possibly the previous sentence formed the conclusion of the list, and this was an insertion. Some LXX manuscripts omit Zabbud, whereas 1 Esd 8:40 has a more schematic and consistent reference: "Uthai son of Istalcurus." The singular "with him," here, as well as the other difficulties with Zabbud, also suggests that Zabbud may be a later insertion. Some versions have Zaccur, which the NJPS and NRSV (but not KJV) follow.

Comments

Ezra introduces the community that accompanies him. After naming three leaders, the list identifies twelve families. It echoes the journey in the wilderness. The reckoning by "males" rather than "men" makes the allusion to the wilderness more perceptible (Num 1:2, 20–22; Yoo 2017, 102–4).

The eponyms of the first three individuals in the list (Ezra 8:2) reach back to Israel's early stages: the wilderness and monarchy, with two priests and a Davidic heir, each with no reference to companions. The list then follows a fairly consistent pattern (8:3–14): an eponym followed by descendants now coming with Ezra to Jerusalem, their leader, and the number of males in his group. First Esdras smooths over some inconsistencies by adding names.

The twelve eponyms or clan/family names in Ezra 8:3–14 represent twelve out of the longer list of Israelites in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 (i.e., Ezra 2:3–15 // Neh 7:8–20). Most of them appear in the same order as in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, cementing parallels to the earliest return. Nine of them in MT Ezra 8 (Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Shephatiah, Joab, Bebai, Azgad, Adonikam, and Bigvai) appear in the first half of Ezra 2 (2:3–15). The similarities are greater in the LXX and 1 Esdras. Most of the descendants' names include the theophoric element (*yah* or *el*), unlike the eponym. While it seems, as most scholars conclude, that Ezra 2 absorbs Ezra's list, Pakkala (2004, 56–58) supposes that Ezra 8:1–14 depends on Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7.

Despite these similarities, the two lists reflect somewhat different perspectives. First, although the Israelite clan names appear largely in the same order in Ezra 2:3–15 and 8:2–14, their positions in the list differ. Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 place the Israelite groups first and thereby highlight their priority, while Ezra 8 places priests first, followed by a Davidic heir. Second, distinctions between the different groups, explicit in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, with titles "people of Israel" (Ezra 2:2b), "priests" (2:36), and "Levites" (2:40), are absent from 8:1–14. As a result, although Ezra 8 suggests greater importance for priests by listing them first, their priestly affiliation is unmarked. Third, by virtue of the first three names, Ezra 8 is implicitly linked to the preexilic period; Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7 is not.

Most of the groups in Ezra's list appear in other lists in EN, such as those who marry foreign wives (Ezra 10: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Bebai) or signatories of the pledge (Neh 10: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Adin, Bebai, Azgad, Bigvai), but not so the individual names. The general order of most names is consistent with lists in Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 10.

The relative silence about priestly affiliation undermines Pakkala's (2004, 58) supposition that the list signals the growing importance of the Aaronide priests. Moreover, the list mentions only two priestly figures when more priests in Ezra's group appear in Ezra 8:15–18. That Aaron is mentioned only thrice in EN (Ezra 7:5 and Neh 10:39, 12:47) further challenges the view that EN reflects the ascendance of Aaron. (On Aaronide priests, see Rooke 2000 and Hunt 2006).

The list has the appearance of an official census list, but the schematic pattern, of three individuals (priests Gershom and Daniel, and Davidic Hattush) followed by twelve groups of Israelites, suggests a deliberate orientation. Later composition of prophetic literature (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve) reflects a similar pattern; Jewish tradition comes to associate this format with three patriarchs and twelve tribes. While there is no need to consider influence beyond the traditional use of the number twelve, the offerings on behalf of the twelve tribes in Ezra 8:35 indicate a symbolically comprehensive representation. To Williamson (1985, 111) the number twelve suggests "not so much that Ezra was aiming to reunite all the remnants of former Israel, as Koch supposes, as that he regarded his own more restricted community as the sole legitimate representative and heir of Israel." Yet this entourage joins others already in the land (Ezra 8:35). Clearly, Ezra recognizes previous "returnees" as legitimate. Still, symbolic representation seems to be at work.

The total of Ezra's companions adds up to 1,513 men (Ezra 8:2–14; 1,690 according to 1 Esdras; so Blenkinsopp 1988, 160). Williamson (1985, 110) (who regards the list as largely reliable historically) estimates approximately 5,000 when women and children were reckoned. Japhet (2019, 207) estimates 7,000.

The list and Ezra's mission as a whole indicate that Judeans continued to live in communities in Babylonia, with families that maintained some Judean identity more than a century after deportation. The names, not only repatriation, indicate this. As Ezra 7–8 illustrates, Judeans came in stages. Archaeology supports a slow increase of population in Judah during this period.

In contrast to Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, where foreign names with obscure meanings abound, the names of leaders coming with Ezra are predominantly Hebrew and contain theophoric elements, more than a century after exile. There are *el* names (Daniel [v. 2], Eliehoenai [v. 4], Jehaziel [v. 5], Michael [v. 8], Jehiel [v. 9], Eliphelet [v. 13], and Jeuel [v. 13]), and there are *yah/yo* names (Shecaniah [vv. 3, 5], Zechariah [vv. 3, 11], Jonathan [v. 6], Jeshaiah [v. 7], Athaliah [v. 7], Shephatiah [v. 8], Zebadiah [v. 8], Obadiah [v. 9], Josiphiah [v. 10], Johanan [v. 12], and Shemaiah [v. 13]). Some such names are familiar as well from Elephantine and the Judean tablets from Persian-period Babylonia, including the Al Yahudu tablets (although there are no *el* names in Elephantine).

If reliably reflecting the fifth or fourth century BCE (and even later), such names illustrate a resurgence of religious consciousness and Judean identity in Babylonia. The popularity of the *el* element, meaning either the generic "god" or a reference to Israel's God (as in the name Israel itself), also suggests a possible strategy for accommodation

to conditions of exile. Since the Hebrew *ʾēl* resembled in sound the Akkadian cognate, such names would have permitted Judeans to have distinctly Israelite names without being conspicuous in a foreign land. Thus Coogan (1983, 254) observes, "This revival of an older style, while not unrelated to the general renewal of interest in Israel's past which characterizes much of the post-exilic literature, may also have been due to a conscious intent to be ambiguous."

The hundreds of tablets from the Babylon-Borsippa region, including Al Yahudu and Beit Biram, underscore the prominence of Hebrew names with theophoric elements. Pearce (2006) notes that some eighty names contain forms of Yahwistic theophoric element, about 15 percent of the entire corpus. Furthermore, "when individuals are counted, the preliminary statistics suggest that approximately 600 individuals can be identified in the corpus and that, of these, approximately 120 bear Yahwistic names" (ibid., 404; see also Pearce and Wunsch 2014).

There is nothing improbable in the list itself but also no external supporting evidence to confirm its reliability. As with other sources in EN, scholars differ in their estimation of the authenticity of the list and its origin. Batten (1913, 316–18), Hölscher (1923, 517–18), Kellermann (1967, 63–64), and Kratz (2000, 82) regard it as a later addition. In der Smitten (1973, 20–21; cited by Pakkala 2004, 56) and Blenkinsopp (1988, 161), with reservations, suggest it is original to this context.

Williamson (1985, 108–9) considers this list to be originally independent but embedded early into its present literary setting, probably by the first author of EN. That this literary setting is secondary is evident, for Williamson, from the resumptive repetition in Ezra 8:15 and 7:28. He concludes on literary grounds that "it is probable that it reflects accurately the participants in Ezra's return" (ibid., 110). Yoo (2017, 102–4), who regards it largely as an authentic account, considers it integral to the Ezra Memoir.

Becking (2018, 118) suggests a likely ad hoc composition with an ideology about the community under priestly guidance. Japhet (2019, 207), however, considers it to present an authentic picture of households in Judah during the period of the restoration.

Whatever its origin, date, and reliability, the inclusion of the list at the beginning of the Ezra Memoir introduces Ezra as one who recognizes others as essential to his mission. The contrast with Nehemiah, whose only companions are "army and horsemen," is unavoidable (Eskenazi 1988a, 127–54).

B. Initial Implementation of the Task (8:15–36)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra describes his mission by lingering on a crucial detour in the preparation for going to Jerusalem: recruiting Levites as indispensable cult personnel. He briefly describes other preparations for the long journey before recording his arrival and the transfer of gifts to Judean authorities in Jerusalem. The recruitment of Levites is particularly striking and is the focus of scholarly discussions.

The structure of Ezra 8:15–36 is as follows:

1. Assembly and recruiting of Levites (8:15–20)
2. Final preparations (8:21–30)
3. Journey and arrival in Jerusalem (8:31–36)

I. ASSEMBLY AND RECRUITING OF LEVITES (8:15–20)

8 [15]And I gathered them by the river that comes to Ahava, and we camped there three days; and I discerned the people and the priests, and I did not find there from the sons of Levi. [16]And I sent for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah and for Meshullam, heads, and for Joiarib and for Elnathan, discerning ones. [17]And I sent them out to Iddo, the head in Casiphia, the place, and I put words in their mouth to speak to Iddo, [and?] his brother located in Casiphia, the place, to bring to us attendants for the house of our God. [18]And they brought to us, in accordance with the good hand of God upon us, a man of good sense of the sons of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers: 18, [19]and Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons: 20. [20]And of the Netinim whom David and the chiefs had given to the service of the Levites, Netinim: 220, all inscribed by name.

Introduction

Noticing the absence of Levites, Ezra sends messengers to Casiphia to get them. This digression forces attention to the importance of the Levites. The historical issues that might account for the shortage of Levites and their concentration in Casiphia are difficult to determine. Importantly, however, EN reiterates how essential they are for Israel's "house of God" and the restoration as a whole.

Although short, this unit poses a number of textual problems as well as historical ones, especially concerning "Casiphia, the place" (v. 17).

Notes

8:15. *And I gathered them by the river that comes to Ahava, and we camped there three days; and I discerned the people and the priests, and I did not find there from the sons of Levi.* This section is replete with organizational activities by Ezra. In contrast to his more "reactive" role later, Ezra is firmly and fully in charge (he gathers [v. 15], reviews [v. 15], sends [v. 16], and commands or sends [v. 17]). But, consistent with Ezra's portrait elsewhere, he expressly includes others, enlarging the circle of leaders and granting them power. Although Ezra's entourage already includes some priests (two are named in Ezra 8:2, but others are mentioned in 8:24), Levites are his paramount concern. Several incidents in EN point to controversies regarding Levites' participation (see, e.g., Neh 13:10–13), but the issues are not clear. Artaxerxes' stipulations mention Levites and Netinim (Ezra 7:24).

Ahava. The river and its location in Babylonia (here and in Ezra 8:21 and 31) are unknown. Babylonian records, such as the Murashu and Al Yahudu tablets, repeatedly point to Judeans settled near canals. Presumably they were engaged with the upkeep of canals, a major economic lifeline in Babylonian society (see also Ezek 1:1 and Ps 137:1).

three days. Three days of preparations here and three upon arrival in Jerusalem (Ezra 8:32) frame the journey. The reference to three days in Neh 2:11 (along with other details that link Ezra and Nehemiah) have led Kellermann (1967, 64) to suggest typologies aiming to critique Nehemiah and extol Ezra at his expense (see also In der Smitten 1973, 22–23). Williamson (1985, 115) rejects such deliberate association of the figures. In his view, apparent echoes between the stories about these two men result from nar-

rative and historical conventions. However, while the three days are conventional, the mention of them is optional, and the cumulative force of parallels between the two figures cannot be easily dismissed (Eskenazi 1988a, esp. 127–54). Nearly every aspect of Ezra's preparations functions, among other things, as an implicit commentary on Nehemiah's activities, including the peculiar use of the word *ʾābhînâ,* "I discerned" (here in 8:15 and in Neh 13:7). The Ezra Memoir develops a persistent contrast to Nehemiah's singlehanded, autocratic style.

and I discerned. The verb *b.y.n.* in the *qal* most commonly means "to understand," as in Isa 43:10. The LXX has *synēxa,* which has a similar semantic range. It is difficult to translate the precise intention of the term here. The awkwardness of the present English translation reflects the awkward Hebrew. The Hebrew verb in the *hiphil* can mean "to explain," that is, to cause others to understand (as in Neh 8:7), and individuals of discernment (as in Ezra 8:16); but it also refers to making distinctions, a connotation that can help explain its function here. Nevertheless, the use of the verb here seems odd when compared with its most common meanings (in the rest of EN and elsewhere) as "to understand" or "to perceive." Japhet (2019, 209) suggests it means "to examine" here like *b.d.q.* The NRSV and NJPS have "reviewed." Alter (2018, 823) has "inspected." See also Neh 13:7.

With the preposition *b,* "in" or "among," following the verb (instead of the customary "the"), the verb appears in Neh 8:8, 12; 13:7; and Dan 9:23. "Discerning" would be consistent with other occurrences of the verb in EN (but see Notes at Ezra 8:16). *Mezudath David* explains: "I paid careful attention to know who the people were who were going with me" (trans. Rosenberg 1991, 156).

The form of the verb is unusual and appears in EN mostly in the Ezra Memoir and the Nehemiah Memoir (twelve times in Ezra, for "gathered" in Ezra 7:28, "sent" in 8:16, "took out" and "placed" in 8:17, "fasted" and "sought" in 8:23, "separated" in 8:24, "weighed" in 8:25 and 26, "said" in 8:28, and "traveled" in 8:31). This form appears in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Qumran, but not in Chronicles (Japhet 2019, 16).

I did not find there from the sons of Levi. The absence of Levites is striking. No explanation is given. Their absence could have resulted from control by priests and competition among cultic personnel regarding responsibilities and resources. Nehemiah 13:4–13 records Nehemiah's efforts to ensure that Levitical provisions are maintained. Nehemiah 12:27 reflects some problems, leading Levites to retreat from Jerusalem. On the tension concerning the role of Levites, see also Mal 2:4–8, 3:3, and especially Ezekiel, who attacks some Levites for violating God's sanctity (e.g., Ezek 44:10) while praising the Zadokite priests (e.g., 44:15).

Rabbinic literature discusses the absence of Levites at length in improbable terms. Some argue that Ezra fined them as a result (b. Yebam. 96b); others explain that the Levites earlier had mutilated themselves in order to avoid singing for Nebuchadnezzar (Pseudo Rashi and b. Qidd. 69b).

Williamson (1985), however, does not regard obtaining Levites as a sign of tension. Quoting Koch (1974, 187), he supposes that the delay to recruit Levites is intelligible "only against the background of the order of the march through the desert after the original Exodus. In accordance with the P [Priestly] source (Num x. 13ff.), there must be Levites with special tasks, as well as priests and laymen, with Ezra also" (Williamson

1985, 116). At any rate, Ezra literally goes out of his way to makes it clear that Levites are essential.

According to 1 Esd 8:42 there were no "descendants of the priests or of the Levites."

8:16. *And I sent for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah and for Meshullam, heads, and for Joiarib and for Elnathan, discerning ones.* Ezra characteristically forms a committee, this time a delegation to recruit more cult personnel. They are called "heads" or "discerning ones." The MT lists two groups with different titles. Since the two names in the second group look remarkably like a dittography of names from the first, Williamson (1985, 112) omits them and follows 1 Esdras's rendition of an eight-person delegation collectively called (by Williamson) "intelligent leaders" (as per 1 Esdras). Blenkinsopp (1988, 163), on the other hand, retains the MT division in which two members are singled out for the task of "teaching."

Most of the names in Ezra 8:16 contain a theophoric element, testifying to the persistence of Yahwistic names in diaspora more than one hundred years after exile. Most of them are common (Elnathan appears three times in this list alone) and cannot be specifically identified. Two of these names appear as heads in the earlier list (Ezra 8:1–14): Shemaiah (see 8:13) and Zechariah (see 8:3). The absence of patronyms, however, prevents knowing whether these names belong to the same individuals in both cases. Since Ezra 8:1–14 refers to about fifteen hundred men, one can expect different people with the same name. Five of these names recur among those marrying foreign wives, but no firm link between these individuals is possible.

First Esdras 8:44 omits the third Elnathan and combines "leaders and men of understanding" at the end of the verse, making for smoother reading. It transliterates the names with some slight differences.

Meshullam. A Meshullam appears elsewhere in EN. Meshullam son of Berechiah helps build Jerusalem's walls (Neh 3:4, 30). Berechiah's daughter married into Tobiah's family (Neh 6:18). Attempts to link the Meshullam of Ezra 8:16 with the latter figure are too hypothetical to pursue since the name without a patronym belongs elsewhere to different families (of Bani in Ezra 10:29, of Joed in Neh 11:7, of Zadok in Neh 11:11; see Suiter 1992, 155, for a discussion).

discerning ones. The LXX has *suniontas.* According to Blenkinsopp (1988, 165), "here and elsewhere in C's history the term *mēbîn* . . . can also designate a person with a special skill and, more specifically, one who teaches that skill to others. In C's history almost all occurrences refer to Levites." By "C," Blenkinsopp means the Chronicler responsible for both Chronicles and EN. A closer examination of the use of the term in EN suggests different emphases from those of Chronicles. EN does not seem to reflect a technical meaning exclusively or explicitly connected to Levites. Clearly those called *mēbînîm* in this verse are not Levites (they are commissioned to recruit Levites). Of the ten occurrences of the verb in MT EN (Ezra 8:15, 16; Neh 8:2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12; 10:29; 13:7) only one other expressly specifies Levites (Neh 8:9). What the awkward term achieves, both here and in Ezra 8:15, is a link between Ezra's activities and skill and those of his newly appointed commission.

8:17. *And I sent them out.* The verb is an unusual form of the verb y.ṣ.ʾ, "to take out." It is also possible that the second and third letters were transposed, in which case this would mean "commanded," which the KJV seems to follow.

Iddo, the head. Nothing more is known about this person. The name in English resembles that of the prophet Zechariah's ancestor but differs in Hebrew. Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 75) connects "head" here with the title *rešu* in the Babylonian documents from the Babylonian and Persian periods, used for an official appointed over royal estates, including temple servants. Apparently Iddo supervised cult personnel in a community noted for such members.

in Casiphia, the place. The LXX has *argyriō,* "silver," for Casiphia, influenced by the Hebrew term *k.s.p.*, "silver." Casiphia is not mentioned elsewhere, and its location is unknown. Some tentatively suggest a town where Israelite deportees might have been settled in the eighth century BCE (Younger 1998; Leuchter 2009, 179). The root, "silver," also suggests a place related to silver mines or a locale where silversmith guilds settled (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 165, citing Cowley 13.1, 19). An administrative center for collecting taxes has also been proposed (Leuchter 2009, 179). Most intriguing, however, is the possibility of a cult center (see, e.g., Williamson 1985, 117), indicated by the specific emphasis on "the place" (twice); it suggests a sanctuary since "the place" appears as a technical term for sanctuary in Deut 12:5, 1 Kgs 8:29, and elsewhere (see also Ezra 9:8). Zechariah 5:5–11 may represent a polemic against such a sanctuary in Babylonia ("Shinar"). We know that Judeans in Elephantine, Egypt, had their own sanctuary (*TAD* A 4.7 // Cowley 30) despite the prohibition of Deuteronomy. Blenkinsopp (1988, 166) supposes that "there must have existed at Casiphia a school, comparable to the Egyptian 'house of life,' for the training of temple personnel. Whatever conclusion is reached about the origins and location of the P [Priestly] source in the Pentateuch, the study of law, including ritual law, which was going on in the diaspora must have had some such institutional basis." It is not surprising, therefore, that such a place existed; it is perhaps more surprising that such a tradition was so fully suppressed.

First Esdras 8:45, echoing the LXX and *k.s.p.*, "silver," of the Hebrew, has "treasury."

I put words in their mouth to speak to Iddo, [and?] his brother located in Casiphia. The Hebrew is awkward and so translated, yet the essential point of the sentence is clear: Ezra tells his messengers what to say. The conjunction "and" before "his brother" may have dropped off.

his brother. The LXX has "his brothers," for which the Hebrew will have had the same four consonants *'.ḥ.y.w.* but with a different pointing. The NRSV, KJV, NJPS, and 1 Esd 8:45 helpfully add the conjunction "and." Y. Rabinowitz (1984, 176), on the other hand, reads the word as a name, "A'hiv."

located. The K has *nětûnîm,* a form of *n.t.n.,* meaning someones or somethings given or placed; it is followed here. The Q has *nětînîm,* followed by many and translated variously as "ministers" (NRSV) or "temple-servants" (NJPS; Fried 2015a, 346). The LXX transliterates as *nathinim* (so too the KJV). Y. Rabinowitz's (1984, 176) "settled," like Alter's (2018, 823) "located," imply that these cult personnel were placed in Casiphia. Williamson's (1985, 113) "devoted to" indicates people formally assigned, echoing Num 3:9, where Levites are given, *nětûnîm,* to priests. On "Netinim," possibly as per the Q, see Notes at Ezra 2:43. First Esdras 8:46 has "treasurers."

attendants. Heb. *měšārětîm.* The LXX has "singers," presumably reading *šārîm* or *měšōrĕrîm.* The verb *š.r.t.* indicates service to others, common in Exodus and Numbers for the work of Levites (e.g., Num 8:26).

8:18. *And they brought to us, in accordance with the good hand of God upon us, a man of good sense of the sons of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, Sherebiah, and his sons and brothers: 18.* Ezra gives the delegation credit for the success (note "they brought to us") but acknowledges most fully God's watchful presence as the ultimate source of their success. Minor awkward linguistic features result in slight divergences among the versions, but without significance for the unfolding story.

in accordance with the good hand of God upon us. For this expression denoting divine benevolence, see "the hand of YHWH his God upon him" at Ezra 7:6. Blenkinsopp (1988, 163) translates "we enjoyed the favor of our God."

a man of good sense. Heb. *ʾîš śekel.* The LXX has *anēr sachel,* transliterating the challenging term. The Hebrew term *śekhel* connotes intelligence and understanding, the ability to make sense of things. Ezra's colleagues in Neh 8:8 (who include a Sherebiah; see below) "give *śekhel,*" that is, expound and help make sense of the *torah.* Nehemiah 8:13, 9:20; Dan 1:4, 17; and Dan 8:25 suggest acquiring wisdom. As Japhet (2019, 211) observes, all examples of the term in the Bible imply people with exceptional understanding in carrying out assigned tasks. The singular noun here credits only one person with such noteworthy discernment. First Esdras 4:47, however, uses the plural.

Mahli son of Levi son of Israel. Mahli in the Pentateuch was son of Merari and grandson of Levi. Numbers 3:33–36 outlines the special responsibilities of the Merari group. These include carrying the vessels of the tabernacle (Num 3:36). First Chronicles 23:21–32 offers additional details for this family: David appoints them "alongside the Aaronites for the service of the House of the Lord, to look after the courts and the chambers, and the purity of all the holy things, and the performance of the service of the House of God" (1 Chr 23:28), and for praise songs and sacrificial offerings.

son of Israel. This reference is unusual in EN (but common to Chronicles). "Israel" most likely means Jacob.

Sherebiah. The LXX replaces the name with "at the beginning." This newly enlisted Levite with his partner Hashabiah will be appointed to a special task of carrying the gifts for the temple (see Ezra 8:24), a task recalling the role of Levites in the wilderness when they carried the accoutrements of the tabernacle (Num 3:33–36). A Levite with this name (without patronym) plays an important role in several subsequent events: the reading of the *torah* (Neh 8:7), where he participates in giving sense (*śekel*); leading worship of praise and repentance (Neh 9:4–5); and signing the pledge (Neh 10:13).

The MT has an explicative *waw,* "and," before Sherebiah's name, thus Williamson's (1985, 113) "namely Sherebiah," emphasizing Sherebiah as Mahli's descendant. First Esdras 8:47 has "namely Sherebiah."

sons and brothers: 18. This contingent of Levites (total of thirty-eight, given the twenty in the next verse) is proportionately large when we recall that only seventy-four were listed in Ezra 2:40 // Neh 7:43.

8:19. *and Hashabiah.* Like Sherebiah, this person will be appointed to a special task by Ezra.

and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons: 20. Merari is the third son of Levi and father of Mahli (Exod 6:16). Both Levites are explicitly linked to ancient ancestors and in this sense parallel the listing of the priests in Ezra 8:2. The

form establishes a kind of parity between priests and Levites, something Ezra will make explicit below. It also highlights the ancient roots of the group. First Esdras 8:48 replaces this name with a form of Hananiah.

8:20. *And of the Netinim whom David and the chiefs had given to the service of the Levites, Netinim: 220, all inscribed by name.* This verse provides the fullest exposition available about the origin and function of Netinim. The Hebrew verb for "had given," *n.t.n.,* forms the noun Netinim. As noted earlier (see NOTES at Ezra 2:43), the Netinim originally may have been foreign but given in service at some point. First Kings 9:20 suggests this possibility (since Solomon yoked foreigners as corvée). Yet Netinim are mentioned only in EN, with one cursory reference in 1 Chr 9:2, which most clearly depends on Neh 11:3.

The contingent of Netinim is quite large, especially when compared with the returnees in Ezra 2:43–54, where Netinim and Solomon's servants together add up to 392. The 220 Netinim here and the large number of Levites underscore the importance of Casiphia as a center for cult personnel. This heightens the mystery of Casiphia and of Judean life in the diaspora.

For reasons that are not obvious, the MT separates this verse from the preceding unit and appends it to Ezra 8:21–30. For more on the Netinim, whose origin and specific function remain a mystery, see "The Netinim" at Ezra 2:43.

David and the chiefs. Here, as elsewhere in EN, David is only a founder of cult traditions (see Ezra 3:10 and Neh 12:24, 36, 45, and 46). His role in the cult is more prominent in EN than that of Moses. Yet even he does not work alone but appoints personnel together with a group of leaders.

the chiefs. The LXX has *archontes.* This title carries only a general sense of high rank in EN, where political titles are mostly fluid. The authors of textual notes in the *BHS,* apparently uneasy with this reference, suggest that perhaps *śārîm* should be read as "attendants" or "those who attend" (*měšārētîm*), understood to modify "Netinim." But this emendation has no textual support.

all inscribed by name. The LXX uses *synēchthēsan* for "inscribed." The unusual Hebrew verb for recording names combines two ideas inherent in the root of *n.q.b.:* piercing and making something permanent (like establishing a price in Gen 30:28). The former suggests the physical act of cutting through hard material and the tradition of inscribing on stone. But it also describes cuneiform writing on clay tablets, where the stylus is pushed into the soft clay to form the letters. This practice may have influenced the use of the term even after the technology of writing changed. Perhaps we are to imagine that Netinim, coming from Babylonia, still recorded such data on clay tablets, the common medium there. The idea conveyed by this term here is one of solid record ("written in stone" so to speak). This rare term for listing people is confined to this verse, Num 1:17, and Chronicles. All with one exception (2 Chr 28:15) pertain to significant records. In Num 1:17 it refers to leaders whom Moses and Aaron gather; in Chronicles, to those nobles who gathered to crown David (1 Chr 12:32 [ET 31]) and to important lists of priests and Levites (1 Chr 16:41, 2 Chr 31:19). These examples may reflect late biblical Hebrew. The verb also bears an interesting relation to both "female," *nĕqēbâ,* and *nōqēb,* related to "blaspheme," in Lev 24:16. First Esdras 8:49 uses *onomatographia,* "a [written] name list."

Whatever the etymological background of *niqqĕbû* here, by using this verb the Ezra Memoir links the record of these newly added cult personnel with the census of Israel at Sinai as it embarks on the journey to the promised land.

Comments

Ezra begins his mission by assembling a caravan and ensuring broad representation of the community. He reports these activities at length, with special attention to the Levites, who are at the center of this episode.

The surprising absence of Levites may reflect tension in the cult concerning spheres of responsibilities and privileges (which makes the elaborate details of tax exemptions in Artaxerxes' letter all the more important). In EN, Nehemiah 10 addresses some fiscal arrangements for Levites, whereas Neh 13:10 shows problems with compliance. Ezra 2:36–40 shows the disproportionate ratio of priests (4,189) and Levites (74) in a community of more than 42,000; Ezra's successful recruitment of 38 Levites for a caravan of some 1,500 men is therefore all the more impressive.

A possible controversy may lurk behind the reluctance of Levites to go to Jerusalem. Tension over control of the cult persists throughout the Second Temple period down to the first century CE (Rooke 2000; Hunt 2006). Possibly, the privileged position of Aaronide priests was a factor. It is therefore significant that Ezra, himself an Aaronide from the line of Zadok, takes such care to obtain and include Levites as indispensable to his mission. Ezra thus appears to function as a conciliatory figure.

The appointment of the Netinim is credited to David, and their purpose is clarified (specifically to serve the Levites; Ezra 8:20). David plays a minor role in EN (in contrast to Chronicles) exclusively limited to the cult (see, e.g., Ezra 3:10 and Neh 12:36). It is historically improbable that he commissioned those called Netinim in the postexilic period. They appear only in EN, with one cursory mention in Chronicles (1 Chr 9:2) that depends on EN. Conceivably, some of these low-level cult servants were of foreign origin (as certain names in Ezra 2:43–54 suggest), and the Davidic ascription made it possible for them to be absorbed into the Judean cult.

The most tantalizing issue in this section is the reference to "Casiphia, the place" (Ezra 8:17), the location, nature, and significance of which stand at the center of scholarly discussions. Scholars debate whether Casiphia included an actual sanctuary, like that of Elephantine. To some, the reference suggests a sanctuary or a cult center in Babylonia since "the place" in several other texts carries such connotations (but see Clines 1984, 110, who thinks otherwise). Even if no active sanctuary or temple can be supposed in that otherwise unknown location, it clearly boasts a concentration of cult personnel able to supply a large number of Levites and Netinim.

Most scholars regard Casiphia as an unknown location (see Williamson 1985, 117; Blenkinsopp 1988, 165; Becking 2018, 124), possibly a center for imperial taxation, given the name (*k.s.p.* meaning "silver"). Leuchter (2009, 179), however, considers it an identifiable site along a major route in Mesopotamia that made it a prime location for settling deportees in the Neo-Assyrian period. He claims that it became a major settlement of northern Israelites, with Judean deportees joining later. He envisions that by the mid-fifth century BCE Casiphia had become "a major center of Jewish life in Diaspora" (ibid., 180), a "locus of Levite scribal and teaching activities" (ibid., 182) that evolved differently from those in Jerusalem (ibid., 190).

While a center of some sort is definitely indicated, detailed claims about its specific traditions stand on little evidence. Japhet's (2019, 210) conclusion is to the point: although one cannot exclude the possibility of sanctuaries or "religious" schools in the Babylonian diaspora, we do not have any evidence.

The Ezra Memoir presents Ezra's pivotal role in expanding the role of the Levites and bringing more of them (and Netinim) to Jerusalem from Babylonia. What needs noting is not only that EN shows Ezra going out of his way to recruit them, but also how he does it. The Ezra Memoir lingers on the process itself, which includes forming a committee and crediting it with the accomplishment. Once again, Ezra takes care to record the roles that others play and to credit them with success (Ezra 8:18). In so doing EN also underscores the importance of the wide range of cult personnel for a representative community.

2. FINAL PREPARATIONS (8:21–30)

8 [21]And I called there a fast, by the river Ahava, for self-humbling before our God to beseech him for a straight way for ourselves and our little ones and for all our goods. [22]For I was ashamed to ask of the king for army and horsemen to help us against enemies on the way, for we had said to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is for good upon all who beseech him, and his might and anger are upon all who forsake him." [23]And we fasted and beseeched our God concerning this and he hearkened to us.

[24]And I separated twelve from the chiefs of the priests to Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers. [25]And I weighed to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, raised offering to the house of our God that the king and his counselors and his chiefs, and all Israel that were found, had raised. [26]And I weighed into their hands silver: 650 talents; and silver vessels: 100; by talents, gold: 100 talents; [27]and gold bowls: 20 of 1,000 darics; and vessels of good bronze, gleaming: 2, as precious as gold. [28]And I said to them: "You are consecrated to YHWH and the vessels are consecrated; and the silver and the gold are a free offering to YHWH the God of your fathers. [29]Be vigilant and guard until you weigh [them] before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and the paternal chiefs of Israel in Jerusalem, [in] the chambers of the house of YHWH." [30]And the priests and Levites received the weight of silver and gold and the vessels to bring to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

Introduction

Having assembled a caravan (as per Ezra 7:13), Ezra now takes ritual and practical measures to secure success:

1. He ritually prepares the gathered community by means of a fast (8:21–23).
2. He commissions priests and Levites for their sacred task of transporting the gifts for God's house (8:24–29).

Final preparations include entreating God for safety, important all the more in light of the treasures (Williamson 1985, 118).

The exorbitant gifts and gold (Ezra 8:25–27) defy credibility. While some scholars use the list of gifts to argue that the Ezra material is largely fictional (Becking 2018, 127), others suggest an enthusiastic late insertion that should not discredit the plausibility of other details.

Notes

8:21. *And I called there a fast, by the river Ahava, for self-humbling before our God to beseech him for a straight way for ourselves and our little ones and for all our goods.* Fasting in the Bible and in the ancient world is a commonly recognized ritual of penance, purification, and beseeching divine powers for help. Often, as here, fasts are accompanied by prayer. Such behavior plays a role at several points in EN (Ezra 10:6, Neh 9:1). The purpose of the present fast is to elicit God's compassion and support. Smith-Christopher (1996), who notes the growing emphasis on fasting in the postexilic period, has suggested that fasting was developing as a tool of nonviolent resistance to political oppression. This is evident in EN and in Daniel. In her book on religious feasting and fasting, Bynum (1987) shows how fasting allowed Christian women in medieval Europe to exert control over their lives, and bodies, within the confines of a limiting culture. In EN it may reflect certain resistance with accommodation to imperial rule by means of allegiance to other sources of authority and power.

And I called. The verb from *q.r.a.* has a wide semantic range. First used in Gen 1:5, when God names the light "day," it also means to summon someone to come (Gen 31:4), to call out in supplication (Ps 102:3), and to summon for worship or to proclaim (Lev 23:3). In Deut 31:11 it refers to public reading of the *torah,* as also in Neh 8:3, 8, 18; 9:3; and 13:1.

river Ahava. Ezra 8:15 mentions the river that goes to Ahava; here it is the river itself. Rivers and places that adjoin them often share a name. The specificity adds to the verisimilitude of the account, whether it be an actual report or imagined. Possibly the river played a role in the preparation rituals. First Esdras 8:50 does not mention location but has instead "proclaimed a fast for the young men."

for self-humbling. The verb carries many connotations, including "to violate," "to humiliate," "to rape," or "to afflict." In the *piel* in Lev 16:30–31 it is linked with purification on the day of atonement. In the specific self-reflexive form it appears only here and in Dan 10:12, both as supplication before God.

beseech him. From *b.q.sh.,* "to request." It means to seek information, as in Ezra 2:62. But when addressed to a superior, it indicates seeking favor, petitioning, which is the prevalent use in the Ezra Memoir (Ezra 8:21, 22, 23).

a straight way. The road from Babylon to Jerusalem overlaps portions of what has come to be called the Silk Road. While well-traveled, it was anything but straight or smooth. It traversed mountains and desolate areas along the upper rim of the Syrian desert. The prophet in Isaiah 40, apparently aware of the rough terrain, envisions God's miraculous transformation of the road when promising that

> Every valley shall be lifted up,
> and every mountain and hill be made low;
> the uneven ground shall become level,
> and the rough places a plain. (Isa 40:4)

But the message may not pertain solely or primarily to geography. Under the *Pax Persica,* which anticipated the *Pax Romana* by centuries, a network of very good roads linked all parts of the Persian Empire to facilitate good transportation and communication for commercial and military purposes. Although there were only a few oases en route from Babylon to Judah, way stations at regular intervals (usually a day's journey)

provided some basic security and provisions. Nevertheless, because many areas had only sparse settled population, crossing the barren landscape could be hazardous. Herodotus praises Persian-period roads, describing their efficiency (see, e.g., *Hist.* VIII.98). Xenophon reports that "anyone, whether Greek or native, who was doing no harm could travel without fear wherever he liked" (*Anab.* 1.9). He adds, however, that roadsides displayed mutilated bodies of robbers who received punishment. Such deterrents inevitably imply the possibility of attack (Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 75). First Esdras 8:50 has "a prosperous journey" in lieu of "straight way."

for ourselves and our little ones and for all our goods. Concern for the well-being of vulnerable children and possessions is reasonable even with good roads and regular military posts. Additionally, the length of the trek (some 1,600 kilometers), the size of the caravan (especially with children), and the amount of the valuables would be a reasonable cause for alarm. It is not surprising to learn that Ezra and his companions experienced trepidations. But the steps undertaken disclose EN's agenda: reliance on only divine goodness. What is of interest is not simply that Ezra took such measures but that the book chooses to report them in such detail.

our little ones. Heb. *ṭappēnû,* a term for children that evokes their youth and vulnerability. This mention of the children is the first clue that the caravan (as was to be expected) contained more than just males (Ezra 8:2–14 mentions only males) and was composed of families. However, Ezra does not mention wives or women.

8:22. *For I was ashamed to ask of the king for army and horsemen to help us against enemies on the way.* Ezra's shame contrasts sharply with Nehemiah's boldness. Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem with royal "army and horsemen" (Neh 2:9). It is striking that Ezra records his own sense of shame and anxiety. It shows (among other things) Ezra's refusal to rely on imperial resources. Myers's (1965a, 71) suggestion that Ezra relinquished royal escort in order to avoid drawing attention to the caravan is not persuasive.

For I was ashamed. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms, where the verb "to shame" is used extensively, shame is the lot of the wicked. The righteous, like the psalmist, hope "may I never be ashamed" (or "put to shame") (Ps 71:1). Here, as well as in Ezra 9:6, the concept takes on some new nuances, functioning as confessional language, as also in Dan 9:7–8.

It is not likely, as Williamson (1985, 118) supposes, that a somewhat embarrassed Ezra is explaining in retrospect why he took such an enormous risk. Rather, Ezra is highlighting the power of God to protect without recourse to Persian royal means.

army and horsemen. The reference is to foot soldiers (infantry) and (as the NRSV has it) cavalry, of which the Persians were masters. Caravans along the ancient routes in Mesopotamia in antiquity relied on military escort, and this continued well into the modern era. Even though the road from Babylon to the Mediterranean was commonly used, vast barren areas devoid of settlements and inhabited by nomadic tribes provided a breeding ground for robbers.

While the phrase "army and horsemen" may have been a stock expression, only Ezra (here) and Nehemiah (Neh 2:9) use it in the Bible. Scholars differ on the implications. Kapelrud (1944, 50–51) and In der Smitten (1973, 22) argue for deliberate contrast with Nehemiah. Kapelrud stresses the spiritual superiority of Ezra over Nehemiah, who relied on such an escort, while In der Smitten attributes it to anti-Nehemiah traditions. Williamson (1985, 116) generally doubts that EN deliberately sets Ezra and

Nehemiah against each other. He suggests that similar details in their stories "must be attributed to the historical coincidence of two men undertaking similar ventures at this same general historical period." The contrast is between a practical administrator (Nehemiah) and a religious idealist (Ezra) (ibid., 118). But the accumulated force of the many contrasts between the two men (see Eskenazi 1988a, 127–52) suggests deliberate shaping. Ezra rejects royal military force, which Nehemiah accepts. First Esdras 8:51 has "and an escort to keep us safe."

The hand of our God is for good upon all who beseech him, and his might and anger are upon all who forsake him. The couplets that Ezra uses to explain his message to the king employ traditional theology (e.g., Ps 69:7); "beseech" echoes Psalms as well (see, e.g., Ps 105:4). Yet, while reflecting pervasive biblical theology, the vocabulary here expresses a distinct idea: divine might or force both empowers and disempowers. First Esdras 8:52 omits mention of God's wrath and only states, "The power of our Lord will be with those who seek him, and will support them in every way."

The hand of our God is for good. This is the third reference to God's protective hand in Ezra 7–10; it is repeated in Ezra 8:31 (see Notes at Ezra 7:6, 28; 8:18).

beseech. See Notes at Ezra 8:21.

might. Heb. *ʿōz.* Frequently (especially in Psalms), divine might is a positive virtue (e.g., Ps 29:11). Here, however, "might," paired with "wrath," describes God's treatment of deserters. This deflection of God's might from an instrument of salvation to one of punishment conforms well to the abdication of physical force. It echoes Zechariah's message, "Not by force and not by power but with my spirit, says YHWH of hosts" (Zech 4:6). These statements may represent a realistic accommodation by a subjugated people unable to resort to military force. The strategy that Ezra adopts points to other forms of power (see, e.g., Arendt 1970, 42–44, on different kinds of power).

all who forsake him. Forsaking God hardly seems to be the issue if the fear is about enemies on the road. Instead, the warning serves as backdrop to the conflict to follow in Ezra 9 and 10. God's anger in this prayer falls on backsliders. The success of Ezra's mission and journey becomes proof of the efficacy of turning to God, and a warning against desertion.

8:23. *And we fasted and beseeched our God concerning this and he hearkened to us.* The repetition and the emphasis on the plural underscore communal bonding elicited by Ezra's call in Ezra 8:21. Fasting and beseeching in Ezra 8 replace the reliance on royal military support. The subsequent arrival demonstrates that God responds to contrite beseeching. The NJPS makes explicit "responded to our plea." The ritual also mobilizes a community to affirm its shared destiny. First Esdras 8:53 has "we prayed to our Lord . . . and we found him very merciful."

8:24. *And I separated twelve from the chiefs of the priests to Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers.* Having forged a sense of unity among the travelers to Judah, Ezra designates cult personnel as custodians of the gifts to the temple. Although the Hebrew syntax is somewhat awkward, it is safe to conclude that he commissions twelve priests and twelve Levites. This commissioning harks back to the wilderness traditions and the tabernacle: Num 3:5–10 and 4:1–16 require priests to be responsible for the tabernacle's vessels and the Levites responsible for transporting them. By appointing twelve of each group, Ezra links the process with the ideology of

the twelve tribes. Oddly, Gershom and Daniel, the two priests in the list at Ezra 8:2, are not named here.

First Esdras 8:54 has *deka dyo,* "ten two," rather than the usual term *dōdeka* for "twelve." It mean "two tens." At issue is whether we have two groups (one of priests and one of Levites) or one. In the MT, two groups of twelve seem to be meant.

And I separated. Heb. *b.d.l.* in the *hiphil.* The LXX has *diesteila,* "to charge" or "to order," rather than a form of *chōrizō,* "to separate," used in Ezra 9:1 and 1 Esd 5:54. The difference will prove important, given the weight that "separate" carries in EN. The usual sense of *b.d.l. . . . lĕ* is "to separate for," as in Deut 19:2. This passage is crucial for understanding "separate" in EN. In the present case it means that twelve priests were separated to join the twelve Levites. This sense of joining is confirmed by Ezra 6:21, which has "separated from . . . to seek out." Becking's (2018, 127) preference for *b.d.l.* as "seclude" is suggestive but does not fully capture the broad implications of the term in EN, especially since he does not use this also in 9:1.

To separate and set apart becomes an important idea and practice throughout EN, with *b.d.l.* appearing more often in EN than in any other biblical book (nine times; cf. eight in Leviticus). Beginning with Ezra 6:21 we witness a series of separations. Carter (1999, 312) sums up the three common senses of *b.d.l.* in the Bible: First, "'to separate for a specific purpose' such as military service. . . . When applied to the cultus, this usage of the word refers to the selection of people or tribes for particular cultic duties. In this usage, the Levites were designated to carry the Ark of the Covenant and separated from the rest of Israel (Deut 10:8; Num 8:14)." This sense applies here and is consistent with the other uses of "to separate" in EN. Carter's second sense means "to separate physically," which, when applied to the cultus, "often relates to the designation of sacred space (Exod 26.33)" (ibid.). This meaning may additionally apply to EN. Carter's third usage is "to separate or to serve," a technical term for sacrificial practices (e.g., Lev 1:17).

EN includes injunctions "to separate from" (as in Ezra 9:1) and "to separate to," as here. Sometimes it has both "from" and "to" in the same sentence, as in Ezra 6:21. "To separate to" (with the preposition *ʾel*) means "to join," as in 1 Chr 12:9 when soldiers join David.

The term and its implications become significant for assessing what Ezra 9–10 claims about the crisis of "intermarriage." While the term in EN elevates those who are separated (cult personnel in Ezra 8:24), here it does not necessarily disparage those from whom one separates (others in Ezra's caravan). This point is obscured in the LXX, which uses different verbs for Ezra 8:24 and 9:1, but is maintained by 1 Esd 8:54.

twelve from the chiefs of the priests to Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and with them ten of their brothers. Slight awkwardness in the syntax of the MT creates uncertainty as to whether Ezra selects twelve or twenty-four men. Context suggests that Sherebiah and Hashabiah are those who came to Ezra from Casiphia; they are therefore Levites. Twelve priests are joined to them, together with ten other Levites, comprising a commission of twenty-four. First Esdras 8:54 has, "Then I set apart twelve of the leaders of the priests, and Sherebiah and Hashabiah, and ten of their kinsmen with them."

The MT, in which priests join Levites (and not the other way around) and Levites are named, seems to designate the two Levites as heads of the commission. The NJPS prefers to translate thus: "Then I selected twelve of the chiefs of the priests, namely

Sherebiah and Hashabiah with ten of their brothers." While not impossible, this also seems unlikely. Moreover, the reference to priests and Levites in Ezra 8:30 confirms that the commissioned personnel included both priests and Levites.

In Num 3:5–31 and 4:7–15, both priests and Levites bear responsibility for the items of the tabernacle (Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 75). Ezra specifically balances the two groups, with the symbolic number of twelve representing all Israel. Whereas Num 3:9 speaks of the Levites given to the priests, Ezra 8:24 seems to give the priests to the Levites.

to Sherebiah. The name is preceded in Hebrew by the preposition *lĕ,* which in Hebrew typically means "to." A similar sense (with the preposition *el*) is conveyed in 1 Chr 12:9 when warriors join David. Japhet (2019, 209) observes, however, that *lĕ* can function in late biblical Hebrew in lieu of the preposition for direct object *ʾēt.* First Esdras 8:54 has "and." Possibly the writer emphasizes that the priests joined Sherebiah and the Levites (not the other way around).

Sherebiah, Hashabiah. These two Levites were specifically recruited from Casiphia (see Ezra 8:15–20) and are the only ones named here. None of the twelve priests is identified.

8:25. *And I weighed to them the silver and the gold and the vessels, raised offering to the house of our God that the king and his counselors and his chiefs, and all Israel that were found, had raised.* The report emphasizes the wealth contributed by both the king and other imperial representatives, along with Israel in diaspora. The ambiguity in Cyrus's decree as to who is to support this endeavor is replaced here with clarity that states, in accordance with Artaxerxes' letter (esp. Ezra 7:15ff.), that both groups subsidized the project.

I weighed. The detail indicates careful administration, emphasized by the repetition in v. 26 (Becking 2018, 128).

the silver and the gold and the vessels. The king authorized such items (Ezra 7:15–20).

raised offering . . . had raised. The LXX has *aparchēs,* meaning "first fruit." The Hebrew term regularly refers to cultic offerings (see, e.g., Exod 29:28) and comes from the root *r.w.m.,* "to raise" (physically or symbolically). The cultic nature of the gifts is conveyed, even though the items themselves have noncultic origins. This cultic terminology explains the LXX's choice of "first fruits" here.

the king and his counselors and his chiefs. Some of these costly gifts come from the Persians, not Judeans, although we are not informed what portion. First Esdras 8:55 adds "himself" to "the king."

all Israel. Significantly, "Israel" now refers to Judeans in diaspora.

8:26. *And I weighed into their hands silver: 650 talents; and silver vessels: 100; by talents, gold: 100 talents. The* LXX has "silver: 640 talents; and silver vessels: 100; and gold talents: 100." The passage is awkward, and translators wrestle with the quantities in this verse. The NRSV has "the weight of six hundred and fifty talents of silver, one hundred silver vessels of one talent each, one hundred talents of gold"; the NJPS omits a number, translating "silver, and one hundred silver vessels worth . . . [*sic*] talents, and one hundred talents of gold." The last reference to "talent" is in the singular (translated as plural), adding to the linguistic confusion.

However rendered, the quantities of silver and gold in the MT are, as far as they can be calculated, exorbitant, especially the quantity of talents. One calculation yields

22,000 kilograms (48,501 pounds) for the 650 talents of silver; 3,360 kilograms (7,407 pounds) for 100 gold talents; 8,400 kilograms (18,519 pounds) for the 1,000 darics; plus 3,360 kilograms (7,407 pounds) silver talents (see, e.g., Japhet 2019, 213).

It is impossible to reconcile this information with historical probability. The tribute from the entire fifth satrapy, which included Judah, Syria, and the rest of the Levant, amounted to 350 talents (presumably gold, although Grabbe [1998, 141] supposes silver) at the time of Darius (so Herodotus, *Hist.* III.91). As Williamson (1985, 119) notes, some details, like the vessels, are reasonable; but this leaves the silver and gold, "presumably in ingots—as defying belief, if only because of the physical weight involved: if a talent weighed approximately 75 pounds, then the silver would have weighed more than 24½ tons, and the gold some 3¾ tons. Pavlovsky's solemn attempt, *Bib* 35 (1957) 297–301, to calculate the purchasing power of such a sum merely serves to underline its unreality."

650 talents. Scholars assess the weight of a talent as 34 kilograms (75 pounds). Other funding accounts in the biblical world indicate some ancient understanding of possible worth. Exodus 38:24 records all the gold used for the construction of the tabernacle as more than 29 talents, and adds, "The silver from those of the congregation who were counted was 100 talents" (Exod 38:25). Exodus 38:27 states, "The 100 talents of silver were for casting the bases of the sanctuary . . . 100 bases for the 100 talents, a talent for a base" (NJPS). King Solomon had 420 talents of gold brought to him from Ophir (1 Kgs 9:28) and received 120 gold talents from the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:10). "The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold" (1 Kgs 10:14 // 2 Chr 9:13 NJPS).

It helps to compare these numbers with those of Chronicles, closer to the period of EN, where numbers are even greater. David claims that "I have provided for the house of the Lord one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver" (1 Chr 22:14). Second Chronicles 25:6 adds a perspective, reporting that King Amaziah hired "100,000 mighty warriors from Israel for 100 talents of silver." Centuries later, 4 Maccabees claims that "Jason agreed that if the office were conferred on him he would pay the king 3,660 talents annually" (4 Macc 4:17). Although Herodotus's report about 350 talents annual tribute from the entire fifth satrapy is considered unreliable (*Hist.* III.91), it nevertheless records what was deemed reasonable to a fifth-century BCE historian (on monetary values, see the Comments below).

and silver vessels: 100; by talents, gold: 100 talents. These vessels are not temple vessels like those of Ezra 1:7–11. The Hebrew is difficult; "talents" could be appended instead to the vessels, recording their worth rather than their number, or else (so the NJPS) their value has dropped out.

8:27. *and gold bowls: 20 of 1,000 darics; and vessels of good bronze, gleaming: 2, as precious as gold.* The origin of the bowls is not specified. This term for bowls, *kĕphôr,* appears only in Ezra 1:10, here, and 1 Chr 28:17. In Ezra 1:10, 30 such gold bowls (and 410 silver ones) from the first temple are to be returned to Judah's temple. But nothing here links the present bowls with earlier cultic function. Either alone or together, they are deemed to be worth 1,000 darics (over 8 kilograms [18.5 pounds]).

darics. Heb. *ʾădarkōnîm.* The LXX renders this instead as *hodon chamanim,* "the way of Chamanim." This exact word is used only here and in 1 Chr 29:7. The weight of a daric, at 8.4 grams, is similar to that of a shekel, but the daric is gold. Fried (2015a,

348), who also translates "darics," adds: "If a value, then a daric. If a weight, then a drachma." A Persian daric equaled the worth of twenty silver coins. In Hebrew and in English the words for darics and drachmas are similar, and their precise referent is at times uncertain. The Hebrew word here closely resembles *darkĕmônîm* in Ezra 2:69. The drachma is a Greek/Athenian coin weighing 4.366 grams. Although one LXX manuscript mentions drachmas in this instance, Williamson (1977, 123–26) (who translated "drachma" at Ezra 2:69) defends the translation as darics here. Many translations, as well as BDB, seem to use the terms interchangeably.

The value and weight of this fortune, then, are obviously quite large. The term *chamanim* in the main LXX versions is not familiar. First Esdras omits the term. See also "darics" in Notes at Ezra 2:69 (on monetary values, see also the Comments below).

vessels of good bronze, gleaming: 2, as precious as gold. Also possible: "vessels of bronze, gilded, good, two, precious as gold." The Hebrew is unusual. The LXX omits the number. "Good bronze, gleaming" is as awkward in Hebrew as in English. The feminine form of "good," *ṭôbhâ,* needs to apply to the bronze, which is also feminine (so Pseudo Rashi). The word *mutṣhabh* is a *hapax legomenon* related to the noun *ṣōhābh,* "yellow," also rare (confined to three uses in Lev 13:30–36). First Esdras 8:57 has "twelve bronze vessels that glittered as gold." The Hebrew term *nĕḥōšet,* here translated as "bronze," possibly means "copper" (see, e.g., Rosenberg 1991, 159, and the NJPS translation of the word in Ezek 22:18 and 20). First Esdras 8:57 has twelve, not two, bronze vessels.

8:28. *And I said to them: "You are consecrated to YHWH and the vessels are consecrated; and the silver and the gold are a free offering to YHWH the God of your fathers.* Ezra's message to the priests and Levites encompasses vv. 28–29 (possibly also v. 30 according to Pseudo Ibn Ezra). Although Artaxerxes commissioned Ezra to transfer the gifts, Ezra extends the power to others, expanding their authority for the care of God's house. Importantly, he consecrates them.

You are consecrated. Heb. "you are *qōdeš.*" Most translations have "you are holy." The word *qōdeš* introduces the sacred for the second time in EN (see Ezra 2:63). It applies here to priests, whose unique relation to the holy is designated in the Pentateuch (e.g., Exod 29:1), but also to the Levites. The separation for this task is part and parcel of the process that designates them as consecrated. In contrast to Pentateuchal laws, nothing is said about purification for the task.

consecrated. The LXX has *hagioi,* an adjective. The NRSV and KJV have "holy." But the NJPS "consecrated" is more accurate. The Hebrew noun form designates something as dedicated to God, the holy one ("consecrate" as per the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition: "dedicated to a sacred purpose"). It does not designate holiness as an inherent quality. A person, place, or thing becomes *qōdeš* (not *qādôš,* i.e., imbued with holiness) when it is devoted to God. Perhaps the best way to translate *qōdeš* is "belonging to the holy." Leviticus 27 offers some details about the process of such becoming and prescribes, for example, that "an animal that may be brought as an offering to the YHWH, any such that may be given to the YHWH shall be *qōdeš*" (Lev 27:9). The animal does not become *qādôš* (an attribute of God, as in Lev 19:2) but *qōdeš,* set aside, dedicated as belonging to the holy one. This transformation illustrates that *qōdeš,* as in Ezra 8:28, is not inherent, but rather ascribed (here by Ezra) and is consistent with the use of *qōdeš* elsewhere in the Bible.

The difference between *qōdeš* (belonging to the holy one) and *qādôš* (a holy thing) is crucial for EN, where dedication to God of people and places that are designated as *qōdeš* gradually expands (to include Jerusalem in Neh 11:1 and 18). As Ezra 8:28 shows, sanctity as *qōdeš* for Ezra does not depend on some intrinsic quality. Here, gifts by a foreign king become *qōdeš* when designated for God.

and the vessels are consecrated. Unlike the vessels in Ezra 1:7–11, the vessels here did not come from the first temple. They come from Persians and Judeans in diaspora. Ezra pronounces them as belonging to the holy because they are now dedicated to God.

the silver and the gold are a free offering. Ezra differentiates these gifts from the vessels that have a different status. Japhet (2019, 214) observes that this affects the handling of these resources.

YHWH the God of your fathers. Ezra typically is inclusive in his categories; one would have expected "our fathers," which is what the LXX and 1 Esdras have. Nevertheless, the MT is to be retained. Conceivably, Ezra is trying to emphasize the priests' and Levites' own relation to God.

8:29. *Be vigilant and guard.* Ezra turns over complete responsibility to priests and Levites as guardians of the gifts to the temple. More is required than mere transportation (a Herculean task if the information of v. 25 is even only partially reliable). While *šiqdû,* "be vigilant," refers to a state of wakefulness, *šimrû,* "guard" or "watch," connotes guardians, sentries who protect. These terms in Ps 127:1 refer to those who guard the city.

until you weigh [them] before the chiefs of the priests and the Levites and the paternal chiefs of Israel in Jerusalem, [in] the chambers of the house of YHWH. Having extended authority and responsibility to priests and Levites in his caravan, Ezra now demonstrates his respect for Jerusalem's cult personnel. The Hebrew is awkward, suggesting an insertion, most likely of the paternal chiefs (so *BHS*). Adding chiefs of households further exemplifies authority of the broader community.

chiefs. Becking (2018, 129), who considers the "chiefs" in Ezra 9:1 to be Persian, contemplates that Persian officials may be intended here. There is no evidence for this. Moreover, it is not likely that Ezra or the author of this memoir would transmit such information, given the consistent ideology of EN and v. 22 above.

[in] the chambers. The LXX omits the phrase. The MT does not have the preposition and thus reads "in Jerusalem, the chambers of the house of YHVH." From EN and from extrabiblical sources one learns that Jerusalem's temple, like other ancient temples, had storage and dwelling quarters (see Neh 10:39, 13:4–9). Temples in Babylonia included workshops as well. See also Ezra 10:6.

8:30. *And the priests and Levites received the weight of silver and gold and the vessels to bring to Jerusalem to the house of our God.* After these extensive preparations, a devoted people and devoted objects are ready for their arduous journey. The response to Ezra's commissioning takes the form of action, not words (Japhet 2019, 215).

First Esdras 8:60 refers to the vessels as "the vessels that had been in Jerusalem." In contrast to the MT, it suggests that these vessels are being returned to their place of origin. This contradicts Ezra 7–8 where these are vessels from the Persian court and the people. First Esdras 8:60 also has "the priests and Levites took . . . to the temple" (omitting "to bring").

received. The Ezra Memoir usually uses the imperfect with the *waw* conversive for past events (see, e.g., the verbs in Ezra 8:23, 24, 25, 26, and 31). The perfect form used here suggests that it could be read possibly as future, referring still to Ezra's message to the priests and Levites about the future event in Jerusalem (so Pseudo Ibn Ezra). I read it (with the LXX) as report rather than speech. It describes what the priests and Levites, still in Babylonia, did in response to Ezra's commissioning.

to bring to Jerusalem. In the wilderness narratives, priests and Levites care for and transport the tabernacle vessels and the tent itself (see, e.g., Num 3:5–10 and 4:10–16). Their task here echoes that earlier journey to the promised land. Yoo (2017) understands virtually all of the Ezra material as reenacting the wilderness journey, but strong allusions seem to be concentrated only in Ezra 8.

house of our God. Ezra ends the report about his instructions to the priests and Levites with "the house of our God," the destination of his mission and of EN's focus.

Comments

The Ezra Memoir portrays the journey to Jerusalem as a cultic event centered on providing personnel and provisions for the house of YHWH. The details of preparations, with fasting and commissioning priests and Levites, emphasize the religious character of the journey. They also hark back to the wilderness journey when priests and Levites cared for the ark and tabernacle. The echo of the exodus from Egypt comes from the dates (beginning preparation on the first day of the first month in Ezra 7:9 and departure on the twelfth according to 8:31). The Ezra Memoir emphasizes cooperation and piety. The earlier absence of Levites (8:15), possibly resulting from strife between cultic personnel, is presented by the author as a lesson in community building.

Ezra is portrayed as a leader concerned with the total community, not simply the priestly class. As a priest with impeccable credentials (Ezra 7:1–5), he goes to great length to obtain Levites. He then commissions them together with priests (8:24). Levites and priests, in equal proportion in the MT, receive confirmation that they and the vessels and other treasures have become consecrated, *qōdeš,* by virtue of their dedication to the house of God. Such expanding of the sphere of the sacred continues throughout EN. Ezra persistently transfers power and privilege from himself to the wider community. He also ensures that the status of Jerusalem's leadership not be infringed upon (in spite of the virtually unlimited authority vested in him by Artaxerxes in 7:11–26).

The fortune that Ezra 8:25–27 records in contribution is beyond belief and cannot be reconciled with historical probability. On the symbolic level, especially with reference to vessels, it recalls the return of the temple vessels under Cyrus. But the difference is significant since the present vessels come from the royal court and Judeans in the diaspora, not the temple. The huge flow of gold and silver from Babylonia to Jerusalem may symbolize the reversal of the earlier plunder of the temple. It may reflect postexilic fantasies such as those of Trito-Isaiah (see Isa 60:12–13), but it also evokes traditions about the wilderness and the tabernacle (Yoo 2017, 80–119).

The portrait of Ezra communicates a specific vision of temple, community, and leadership. The vignette about Ezra's shame and reluctance to ask for a military escort contributes much to the theology and ideology of the Ezra Memoir and EN as a whole. Instead of a great hero marching confidently upon the stage of history, backed (as Ezra 7 shows) by divine and royal machinery, we meet a figure who publicly confesses his

shame and insecurity. The contrast is almost of comic proportions and has led historically minded critics to discredit either Ezra or the information in chapter 7 (e.g., Batten 1913, 308; Janzen 2000). To do so, however, is to miss the meaning of the narrative. The details force a comparison with Nehemiah, who bursts upon the scene with much bravado and who, in contrast with Ezra, avails himself of the military escort (Neh 2:9) that Ezra (Ezra 8:22) foregoes. At another level the details underscore Ezra's trust in the divine, an issue of special relevance in an era of Persian rule. Ezra charts a way of life that is independent even while under imperial rule and benefiting from imperial largesse. EN conveys that Ezra's successful journey is both a consequence and a sign of God's good hand upon the faithful (Ezra 8:22 and 8:31; see also 7:6, 9, 28). The contrast between power and force that Hannah Arendt describes fits the situation. Force entails coercion from above; power, in her definition, entails mobilizing for collective goals (Arendt 1970, 44). Ezra and EN illustrate and employ such power.

Two terms in this section require special attention for interpreting subsequent messages in EN: the verb "to separate" (*b.d.l.)* in Ezra 8:24 and the noun "consecrated" (*qōdeš*) in 8:28. The two terms combine in 9:1–2 to frame the opposition to marriage with the peoples of the lands.

Many readers interpret separation as a mark of xenophobia, with hostility to the other from whom separation is requisite. While this may often be the case, separation in EN does not automatically disparage the other. Instead, it highlights a special destiny for those separated. Ezra separates priests and Levites in Ezra 8:21–30 for transporting something valuable. Their status contrasts with other priests, Levites, and Israelites not under such strictures. A hierarchy is established, but without denigrating the rest of the community. The same holds true when Ezra and family heads separate themselves to form an investigating committee (Ezra 10:16).

As for *qōdeš,* it differs from the adjective *qādôš* that indicates being holy and with which scholars often equate *qōdeš.* Ezra 8:28 illustrates that *qōdeš* in the Ezra Memoir, and probably in EN as a whole, means "designated to or devoted to God." This meaning is consistent with *qōdeš* throughout the Bible. The vessels that Ezra pronounces as *qōdeš* have no intrinsic claim to holiness. They come from Persians and Judeans. They acquire a new status by being committed to the holy. Separation is a measure of protecting that dedication. The same meanings then can be ascribed to 9:1–2.

In her study of holiness and purity in EN, Harrington (2008, 115) concludes (regarding Ezra 9:1–2) that "Ezra-Nehemiah takes the concept of separation from impurity beyond the realm of religious practice and into the arena of social policy." She considers this part of EN's move to increase the realm of holiness. This view is correct. Harrington, however, misconstrues the messages when she claims that the result is an "*impenetrable boundary between the returning exiles and everyone else*" (ibid., 116; emphasis original; see further at 9:1–2).

Almost anything in the Bible becomes *qōdeš* when dedicated to God. This applies to land (Exod 3:5), time (Lev 23:7), shekels (Exod 38:26), food (Lev 22:14), and even animals (Lev 27:32). The detailed treatment of consecrated items in Leviticus 27 amply illustrates that *qōdeš,* as an acquired state determined by dedication, is neither intrinsic nor permanent. Its antithesis is not "impure" but *ḥōl,* "common" (Lev 10:10, 1 Sam 21:5), which does not preclude potential impurity but is different from it. The sanctity of the dedicated is acquired and can be removed. It is not and does not become

inherent. A house or animal that has been *qōdeš* can be redeemed and thereby restored to ordinary status and more general use (Lev 27:9–15).

Scholarly discussions of Ezra 8:21–30 do not as a rule concentrate on the meaning of separation and holy in this section but engage these primarily in 9:1–2. Instead, attention focuses on compositional history, origin, authenticity, the improbable gifts to the temple, and calculations of their recorded worth.

Scholars debate the historical reliability of the Ezra Memoir and of Ezra himself. No one, however, defends the historicity of the quantity of gifts. The actual values of ancient weights and monetary units are not always consistent, and purchase power is difficult to assess. The Elephantine papyri help compose a reasonable picture of the economic system, as do some Greek and Babylonian records. The basic monetary unit was the shekel (*šeqel*). The name suggests weight. The following is a list of the categories as most scholars today understand them:

1 shekel = 8.62 grams (but fluctuating at times between 7 and 17 grams; see Powell 1992, 906)
50 shekels = 1 *māneh*/mina
60 *manim*/minas = 1 *kikkar*/talent
1 talent = 3,000 shekels

According to Waterfield and Dewald (1998, 592–93), in the fifth century BCE:

Attic (Euoboic) system:
1 talent = 26 kilograms = 57.3 pounds
1 Babylonian talent = 30.3 kilograms = 66.8 pounds
1 mina = 15.16 ounces = nearly 1 pound
1 daric = 8.4 grams gold
Greek system:
1 talent = 60 minas = 6,000 drachmas = 36,000 obols
1 drachma = 4.3 grams = 6 obols

Turning to the silver and gold in Ezra 8:25–27 (Japhet 2019, 213) we have:

650 silver talents = 22,000 kilograms silver
100 gold talents = 3,360 kilograms gold
Gold vessels worth 1,000 gold darics = 8,400 kilograms
Another 100 silver talents = 3,360 kilograms silver

The total of gold in the lists is about 11,760 kilograms (25,926 pounds, about 13 tons). The total of silver is about 25,360 kilograms (55,909 pounds, about 28 tons).

For slightly different, but still exorbitant, numbers, see Grabbe 1998, 140–41. Some emendations can modify these somewhat, but not enough. This far-fetched record supports those who deny the historicity of any or most portions of the Ezra material (e.g., Becking 2018). Others, however, acknowledge a fanciful addition, without discrediting the rest (e.g., Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988). Numbers in Chronicles illustrate tendencies for hyperbole in such matters (see "650 talents" at Ezra 8:26).

Some, while discounting historicity, concentrate on possible redaction. Kellermann (1967, 64–65) and Pakkala (2004, 62–63) regard the Levites in this section, as well as the search for the Levites in Ezra 8:15–20, as later additions to earlier Ezra material. Pakkala, who notes the indebtedness of this section to Numbers 3 and 4, suggests

that "both Num 1–4 and Ezra 8:15–19*, 24b, 29*, 30 derive from the same general period, when holy vessels became the responsibility of the Levites" (ibid., 63), pointing to a date for Numbers 1–4 in the first half of the fourth century BCE (ibid.).

3. JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM (8:31–36)

8 [31]And we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he saved us from the palm of enemy and ambush on the way. [32]And we came to Jerusalem and settled there three days. [33]And on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed at the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, and with him Eleazar son of Phinehas; and with them Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui the Levites, [34]everything by number and by weight; and all the weight was written down at that time.

[35]Those coming from the captivity, the sons of the exile, sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: bulls: twelve for all Israel; rams: ninety-six; lambs: seventy-seven; goats for purification offering: twelve—all burnt offering to YHWH. [36]And they gave the laws of the king to the king's satraps and the governors of Across-the-River; and they raised up the people and the house of God.

Introduction and Structure

The first part of Ezra's mission concludes when Ezra and his companions successfully deliver the gifts to the temple. The newly arrived offer sacrifices, with the recurrent number twelve for offerings, alluding to the totality of Israel. This section ends with support for "the people and the house of God" (Ezra 8:36).

Scholars focus in particular on the date of the mission and on Meremoth the priest (Ezra 8:33), whose family name is associated with Ezra 2:61. The reference prompts attempts to date Ezra 2, as well as to reconstruct priestly history.

The structure of Ezra 8:31–36 is as follows:

1. The journey (8:31)
2. Arrival and transfer of gifts (8:32–34)
3. Concluding celebration (8:35)
4. Local support for the people and the house of God (8:36)

Notes

8:31. *And we journeyed from the river Ahava on the twelfth of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and he saved us from the palm of enemy and ambush on the way.* Surprisingly, the journey to Jerusalem begins close to Passover (which falls on the fourteenth of the month), with no mention of it. The date evokes associations with the exodus from Egypt but also complicates the picture. Preparations apparently took eleven days (Ezra 7:9 mentions beginning on the first of the month).

we journeyed. The Hebrew uses the verb *n.s.ʿ*. The LXX has *exēramen,* from "to leave" or "to remove." First Esdras 8:61 has "we left." Both Greek versions highlight separation. The Hebrew does not; this verb is the persistent term for the journey in the wilderness in Exodus-Numbers; see especially Numbers 33, where it appears about forty times.

on the twelfth of the first month. The journey begins just before Passover on the fourteenth. Since the exodus from Egypt took place in the first month, one cannot ignore the association. The absence of an explicit mention of Passover (which plays a significant role in Ezra 6:19–22) is puzzling. Fried (2015a, 354) may be right that Deuteronomy's requirement to observe the Passover only in God's chosen place (Jerusalem) could account for this silence. See Notes at Ezra 7:9.

Setting aside symbolic allusions, the first month (late March or April) would have been a practical choice for a long trek to Jerusalem, given weather conditions. Spring is also when kings went forth to battle (2 Sam 11:1).

to go. First Esdras 8:61 has "we arrived in."

the hand of our God was upon us. The recurrent theme of the hand of God (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:22, 31) runs throughout the Ezra narrative. This datum about safe arrival, which might otherwise be superfluous, underscores correspondence between the faithful beseeching God (8:22) and divine response and protection. It credits God, not the Persian king, with safety.

palm. Heb. *kaph.* This unusual term is probably used in order to retain the positive sense of "hand."

enemy and ambush. Unlike the more theological concern in Ezra 8:22 (with backsliders), the danger here is mundane (and realistic): potential robbers and others who might lurk on the roadside. The Hebrew, *ʾôyēbh wĕʾôrēbh,* suggests a wordplay and a stock phrase and/or a hendiadys, which is how 1 Esd 8:61 seems to read it when it omits "ambush" and states "every enemy." Aside from relief over safe arrival, the Ezra Memoir shows no further interest in the long journey (on danger en route; see Notes at Ezra 8:22).

8:32. *And we came to Jerusalem and settled there three days.* No arrival date is mentioned here. Ezra 7:9 already specified arrival on the first of the fifth month, indicating a reasonable, if rigorous, pace for such a journey.

three days. The three days recall the three days of initial preparations (Ezra 8:15) and anticipate the three days of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem (Neh 2:11). Three days could reflect a typical adjustment period for travelers or a symbolic datum. Williamson (1985, 120–21) correctly notes that the three days are not an unreasonable transition period and may be a somewhat stereotypical figure, tantamount to "a few days." He thereby disputes dependency on the Nehemiah Memoir. Nevertheless, persistent parallels between Ezra's activities and Nehemiah's possess an accumulated force and deserve attention. The reference to three days in each "memoir" and the contrast concerning armed escort (Ezra 8:22 and Neh 2:9) are two of several connections between the two figures.

8:33. *And on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the vessels were weighed at the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth son of Uriah the priest, and with him Eleazar son of Phinehas; and with them Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui the Levites.* The stark, businesslike report of arrival omits information about the journey, Ezra's feelings and those of others upon arrival, or Jerusalemites' reaction to the caravan with its huge treasure for the temple. The formal features nevertheless contribute to a specific narratival construct. The official transfer of the treasure in Jerusalem receives special attention. The Ezra Memoir carefully establishes that everything was properly deposited at the house of God (its destination, mentioned first) by proper cult person-

nel. This may account for some scholars' supposition that it represents a report to the king (e.g., Fried 2015a). The meticulous attention to the arrival of the gifts contrasts with the (unexplained) silence about the vessels' arrival in Ezra 1–6.

Two priests and two Levites appear to be in charge in Jerusalem, corresponding to those in Ezra's delegation. The transfer takes place presumably in "the house of our God." There is no mention of the heads of households (see Notes at Ezra 8:29). This verse establishes that Ezra recognizes Judeans in the land and, in turning over the gifts to them, acknowledges the authority of local priests and Levites.

Meremoth son of Uriah the priest. Meremoth has become pivotal for various reconstructions of the history of the priesthood and the dates of Ezra and Nehemiah. According to Neh 3:4, Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz helps build the wall under Nehemiah, even contributing a double share (Neh 3:21). Identifying that Meremoth with the priest in Ezra 8:33, some scholars argue for the priority of Nehemiah over Ezra. In addition, Fried (2015a, 130 and 141–42) relies on Meremoth's position here to suggest that a priest with the Urim and Thummim had arrived between Ezra 2:61 and Ezra's mission in 398 BCE. This would account for how this Meremoth was reinstated here. Such conclusions, however, are far from certain (see the Comments below).

The name Meremoth for a priest appears in EN also in Neh 10:6; 12:3, 15, where it is spelled differently (see also Hakkoz in 1 Chr 24:10). Meremoth in Ezra 10:36 is among nonpriests who married foreign wives. An ostracon from Arad, dated to the second half of the fifth century BCE, also bears this name. Given the relatively wide distribution of the name, it is best to concur with Japhet's (2019, 217) reluctance to draw too many chronological conclusions.

the priest. There is no reason to suppose that Meremoth the priest was a high priest during Ezra's time or that he was demoted (as Koch [1974, 190–91] suggests).

Eleazar son of Phinehas. Nothing further is known about this other leading figure, whose priestly affiliation can be surmised from his name and position in the list. An Eleazar was Aaron's son and father of Phinehas (Exod 6:25). It should not be surprising, given the major roles of Eleazar and Phinehas in the wilderness traditions, that these names would be favored and perpetuated by priests.

with them Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui the Levites. It is consistent with the Ezra Memoir that both priests and Levites, in equal number, take part in this event. Identifying these individuals is difficult. The Levitical lists in Neh 11:15–16 mention a Bunni (a variant form of Binnui) and a Jozabad who were responsible for work on the outside of the house of God. A Levite named Jozabad is also among those married to foreign wives (Ezra 10:23). Nonetheless, a connection with the present figures cannot be ascertained. The name Jeshua is very common (see, e.g., the Levite Jeshua at Ezra 3:9).

Noadiah. Noadiah here is a man. In Neh 6:14 the name refers to a woman, the prophet who opposed Nehemiah.

8:34. *everything by number and by weight; and all the weight was written down at that time.* The ceremonial transfer is described with formality, as befits the magnitude of the gifts. The slightly awkward Hebrew carries a bureaucratic sense of record keeping. Williamson (1985, 113) translates, "Everything was checked by number and by weight." First Esdras 8:64 specifies "at that very time." All these versions capture the formal emphasis that this was done properly and with full accounting.

The rather ponderous sentence suggests to Williamson (1985, 121) someone who is defensive about his stewardship. One can indeed detect a concern to underscore proper procedure, even without recourse to defensiveness. It may also counteract silence about the arrival of the temple vessels (Ezra 1:7–11). Ezra's turning the gifts over to local authorities will be contrasted with Nehemiah's initially avoiding local authorities ("and I didn't tell a person," Neh 2:12), excluding as well "the Judeans, and the priests, and the nobles and the officers" (Neh 2:16).

weight. As is consistent with fiscal systems in antiquity, when coins were unstable and not fully standardized (see, e.g., Mildenberg 1994; Tuplin 1987), weight constituted the more reliable measurement for transactions. Emphasis on careful assessment is indicated, among other things, by the threefold mention of weighing in Ezra 8:33–34.

was written down at that time. As a scribe, especially one expressly appointed by Artaxerxes over these contributions, Ezra would be expected to oversee these procedures and ensure that a record is kept. But the inclusion of this detail also underscores the significance of the written text in EN. Important events flow from and culminate in texts. The careful attention to recording the transfer highlights the silence about the ultimate fate of the restored temple vessels (Ezra 1:7–11; 5:14–16; 6:5). Awareness of this lacuna may account for the writer's eagerness to establish the safe transfer of the present gifts to the temple.

8:35. *Those coming from the captivity, the sons of the exile, sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: bulls: twelve for all Israel; rams: ninety-six; lambs: seventy-seven; goats for purification offering: twelve—all burnt offering to YHWH.* Arrival, implementing one of Ezra's tasks, concludes with sacrifices (Ezra 8:35) and distribution of royal edicts to neighboring officials (8:36). The two final verses display a different vocabulary from the rest of the Ezra Memoir and often are attributed to a later editor (see Williamson 1985, 116; Blenkinsopp 1988, 173). Neither specifically identifies Ezra as author, and all participants and activities are described from a third-person perspective (though this can equally well serve as a part of the Ezra Memoir). The Masoretic notation, furthermore, differentiates this verse from the preceding by means of a *petuḥah* (the notation "P" that marks major units, leaving open space till the next line).

Those coming from the captivity, the sons of the exile. For the first time, Ezra's caravan is designated with language of exile and captivity. This language ties Ezra's mission with Stage One, which concluded with those from exile ("sons of exile" in Ezra 6:21) who celebrated their return and restoration and observed the Passover. The phrase, which closely resembles the heading of the list in Ezra 2:1, also reiterates the overarching theme that each movement from exile to Judah was a stage in response to Cyrus's decree. Hence the parallel in language with references to "captivity" and "exile" here and in Ezra 2:1. Hence, also, the similar language and preoccupation with sacrifices here and in the conclusion of Stage One (6:17).

Reference to "those coming," instead of the "we" in the rest of the Ezra Memoir, is not inconsistent for Ezra in EN. Nonetheless, the echoes of other transitional passages in EN, such as Ezra 2:1, suggest a different hand.

First Esdras 8:65 omits the seeming repetition of "captivity" and "sons of exile." It thus overlooks the overarching design of EN.

sons of the exile. Heb. *bĕnê haggôlâ,* members of the *gôlâ* community. See "exiles/exile" in Notes at Ezra 1:11, 2:1, and 9:4, which discuss the complexity of translating

gôlâ and assessing its full implications. It is noteworthy that the term is first used here upon arrival, as if this identity stands out or becomes relevant once the people are in the land (see also Ezra 6:16, 19).

sacrificed. Heb. from *q.r.b.,* "to come near," a common verb in the Bible for cult offerings (see, e.g., Lev 4:14), related to *qorbān,* usually translated as "sacrifice" or "offering." The language suggests that sacrificial offerings were a means to come close to God.

burnt offerings to the God of Israel: bulls: twelve for all Israel; rams: ninety-six; lambs: seventy-seven; goats for purification offering: twelve—all burnt offering to YHWH. As Williamson (1985, 116) notes, "v 35 is general enough to be based on what the editor expected in the light of the cultic practices with which he would have been familiar." All the sacrifices but one are multiples of twelve, symbolizing "all Israel." They also parallel those offered when the temple was built (Ezra 6:17). The newly arrived now join the larger community and fulfill the stipulations of Artaxerxes' letter, which authorized (and provided for) sacrificial offerings (7:17).

twelve for all Israel. Ezra 7:28 identifies those in the diaspora, some of whom joined Ezra's caravan, as Israel. The very composition of the list in 8:1–14 expresses the notion of an Israel composed of twelve groups, an idea made explicit in 6:17. This view is reinforced by the number twelve and its multiples in the offerings here (only the seventy-seven lambs do not fit the pattern, which may explain why 1 Esd 8:66 has seventy-two). It is widely supposed that EN, at least the Ezra source, includes only the *gôlâ* community in its definition of Israel. But Ezra 8:35 points to a more inclusive use of the term: while the newly arrived diaspora members offer sacrifices, they also join their kin in the land, some of whom came earlier (e.g., 8:33). The emphasis, then, links the *gôlâ* members with "Israel" already in Judah. EN, especially the Ezra Memoir, insists that the diaspora is in the category of Israel. If a conflict about who counts as Israel exists in the Persian period, as sources suggest, the emphasis on *gôlâ* as Israel may be as much insisting that the *gôlâ* too is Israel (to counter allegations such as those in Ezek 33:24 that exclude the diaspora), not only or necessarily that it is the only Israel.

purification offering. Heb. *ḥaṭṭāʾt,* often translated as "sin offering" because the Hebrew verb *ḥ.ṭ.ʾ.* means "sin." This offering is one of two basic sacrifices that cover a wide range of transgressions, including inadvertent ones or those not even detected (see Lev 4 and Milgrom 1991, 253–92). In Leviticus it is often paired with the reparation offering, the *ʾāšām,* also known as "guilt offering" (because the verb *ʾ.š.m.* means "to be guilty"). The cultic requirements in the Pentateuch for virtually all communal events include *ḥaṭṭāʾt* offerings (see, e.g., Num 29:12–38). Like other offerings, it helps restore the relation between individuals, the community, the sanctuary, and God (see further "purification offering" in Notes at Ezra 6:17).

8:36. *And they gave the laws of the king to the king's satraps and the governors of Across-the River; and they raised up the people and the house of God.* The distribution of royal orders to provincial representatives naturally follows from Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:21–24). The reference to "the people" at the end highlights EN's overarching emphasis. The other two major themes in EN, the house of God and documents, are also embedded in this conclusion. The Masoretic notations show a minor disjunction from Ezra 9:1 that follows, using the *setuma* (S) at the end. A number of scholars believe that Neh 8:1 followed this verse originally (see "The Composition of Ezra 9–10" in Comments [9:1–15]).

they gave. The implicit antecedent for "they" is those in v. 35, namely, those coming from captivity. The language is impersonal. The passage is usually credited to a different hand from that of the Ezra Memoir.

laws. Heb. *dātê,* from *dāt,* a Hebrew form of the Aramaic *dāt,* which in Ezra 7:26 refers to God's law and royal law. The LXX has *nomisma,* a term related both to law, *nomos,* and to coins, that is, money. The parallel in 1 Esd 8:64, *prostágmata,* relates to "commands." The NRSV has "commissions," and Blenkinsopp (1988) uses "instructions." The Hebrew form appears elsewhere in the Bible only in Esther, where it refers primarily to royal edicts or laws, as here. Presumably, this refers to versions of Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:12–26) and may define "the law" in 7:26.

satraps. Heb. *ʾăḥaštarpĕnê,* a Persian loan word. The LXX uses *dioikētais,* meaning "managers." It is used only this once in EN but is common in Esther and Daniel for high Persian officials. According to Herodotus (*Hist.* III.90–94), Darius divided the Persian Empire into twenty satrapies, that is, major provinces. Judah was part of the satrapy Across-the-River, and Tattenai was its satrap under Darius. Arsames was the satrap of Egypt in the mid- to late fifth century BCE, but the name of the satrap of Across-the-River then is not known. The plural implies distribution to more than the satrap of Across-the-River.

they raised up. Heb. *n.ś.ʾ.* in the *piel.* The LXX had *edoxasan,* "praised." The Hebrew verb recalls Ezra 1:4, where the subject of the same verb (also in the *piel*) is ambiguous. In both cases, however, the main point is support and elevation of the community by others (Judeans or surrounding foreigners, or both). The awkward use of the term, both here and in 1:4, suggests a deliberate association of the two, highlighting the ongoing implementation of Cyrus's decree.

The verb *n.ś.ʾ.* can also mean (as the LXX and 1 Esdras understand it) "to extol" or "to praise," which Fried (2015a, 356) prefers on the grounds that various provinces were not likely to contribute to Jerusalem's project. But the narrative logic, following Ezra 7:21–22, requires financial support. Lifting up in the sense of support and possibly praise not only points back to Cyrus's decree in 1:4 and Artaxerxes' letter (esp. Ezra 7:21–23); it also points to a contrast to Nehemiah: the arrival of Ezra and his group elicits neighborly cooperation; that of Nehemiah generates conflict (cf. Neh 2:10).

At this conclusion, Ezra and his group appear to have fulfilled all the stipulations of Artaxerxes' letter but two: Ezra has led people to Jerusalem (as per Ezra 7:13). He has secured the proper deliverance of gifts to God's house (as per 7:14–16) and distributed royal instructions to the officials in the region (as per 7:21–24). The remaining mission, an inspection of the community and making the law known, follows next in response to an obstacle.

the people and the house of God. The first part of Ezra's mission ends on a high note, with the elevation of the people and the house of God, two of the three major themes in EN as a whole. These events flow from adherence to documents (EN's third major theme), in this case the letter of Artaxerxes.

Comments

This brief unit records the arrival of Ezra and his companions in Jerusalem and the implementation of part of his mission: going up and bringing gifts to the temple. Once

again, EN shows little interest in the journey itself apart from its danger. We are not informed how tons of silver and gold were transported.

The date for the journey's beginning is puzzling. On the one hand the twelfth of the first month alludes to the exodus and the Passover (dated to the fourteenth of the same month); on the other, it raises questions of whether or how Ezra and his group observed this major biblical festival. After all, Passover in EN crowns the completion of the temple (Ezra 6:19–22), the moment in EN where the resumption of the use of Hebrew also signals a transformation.

Fried (2015a, 353–54, 357) and Yoo (2017, 113–14) suggest Deuteronomy as backdrop, given its requirement that the Passover be celebrated only in Jerusalem. This is the best available explanation, especially given the centrality of Jerusalem in EN and the manner in which EN exemplifies the implementation of Deuteronomy. Fried's proposal that Ezra himself knew nothing of the Passover is unpersuasive.

Most scholars concur that these verses show the marks of different hands (Williamson 1985, 116), with Ezra 8:31–34 consistent with the Ezra Memoir but 8:35–36 from a different, probably later source. Nevertheless, the verses are thematically integral to EN's messages. They demonstrate compliance with Artaxerxes' letter and express EN's overarching themes.

Much scholarly attention has been given to Meremoth son of Uriah in Ezra 8:33. A Meremoth son of Uriah belongs to the Hakkoz family (according to Neh 3:4 and 21). The possibility that the same person is meant here has generated a number of questions and conclusions about the history of the priesthood. The list of returnees (Ezra 2:61–63 // Neh 7:63–64) includes the Hakkoz family among priests who failed to prove their credentials. The "governor" excluded them from certain roles until a priest should arise for the Urim and Thummim. The Meremoth in Neh 3:4 and 21 is not titled "priest." Is he the priest Meremoth son of Uriah in Ezra 8:33, now holding a major position in Jerusalem (which most scholars suppose)?

Scholars since van Hoonacker (1890) relied on Meremoth as evidence for the priority of Nehemiah over Ezra. They claimed that Nehemiah 3 reflects an earlier time (Rudolph 1949, 17, 69). As Rowley (1965, 159) sees it, building the wall in Nehemiah 3 reflects the activity of a young man, whereas the august office as a recipient of sacred contributions in Ezra 8:33 bespeaks a position for an older man (see the rebuttal by Williamson 1985, 121–22).

Fried (2015a) also explores the chronology on the basis of Meremoth. If Hakkoz in Ezra 2:61 is grandfather of Meremoth son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz in Neh 3:4, 21, and if the same Meremoth is meant in 8:33 (which she dates to 398 BCE), then the family status has changed. Its priestly credentials have been reaffirmed between 445 BCE (when Meremoth, without the title "priest," helps build the wall) and Ezra's arrival. A priest with Urim and Thummim had to have appeared because this alone would enable the change in status according to 2:61–63 (ibid., 130). Fried further identifies such a priest, and the restoration of Urim and Thummim, with Jehohanan, a high priest from 410 to 370 BCE.

It is unnecessary to come to such definitive conclusions. It seems reasonable to conclude (with most commentators) that the same individual plays a role in both Ezra 8 and Nehemiah 3 without also concluding that Ezra 8 reflects a later stage of his

career. The presence of Urim and Thummim is not necessarily affirmed by Ezra 8:33. In Ezra 8 Meremoth has a limited charge over the treasury transfer. The Hakkoz family in 2:61–63 was disbarred from partaking of sacred food ("the most consecrated" or "holy of holies") but not necessarily from all priestly roles. In Nehemiah 3, Meremoth, as a family head (and with his family), takes responsibility for the reconstruction of sections of the wall. That does not mean that he personally did the work.

Assuming that the priest Meremoth in Ezra 8:33 is a descendant of the same Hakkoz family of 2:61–63, his leadership role in the present scene may be explained in any of three ways:

1. The Hakkoz family found a way to demonstrate its genealogy and had been reinstated to priestly office in the intervening years.
2. A mechanism had been found for adjudicating dubious cases, possibly through Urim and Thummim but also possibly by some other method.
3. Being debarred from eating of the holy of holies was the important restriction imposed upon these families. Other priestly tasks, such as supervising the treasury, remained open to them.

We can only speculate about these possibilities. It seems, however, that the family that was excluded in some fashion now holds a prominent position despite initial doubts about qualifications.

A second discussion pertains to the official standing of the recipients of the gifts. Van Hoonacker (1901, 182ff.) claimed that Nehemiah first formed a committee of treasurers (Neh 13:13) and that Ezra encounters one already in good functioning order, with the descendants of Nehemiah's appointees in charge; against this view see Williamson (1985, 388–89). Schaper (1997) likewise supposes a standing committee, but he regards it as representing Persian authorities, a view that has no foundation in the text (Becking 2018, 131) or for that matter in Persian administrative policies. According to Koch (1974, 190–91), however, for whom Ezra precedes Nehemiah, it "seems as if Ezra acknowledged Meremoth at the time of the arrival in Jerusalem, but deposed him shortly afterward while carrying out his investigation in Jerusalem by means of the law he had brought with him" (cited by Williamson 1985, 122).

Kellermann (1968, 69) is one of the few who reject the identification of Meremoth in Ezra 8 and Nehemiah 3, suggesting that both Meremoth and Uriah are common enough names. Japhet (2019, 217), for similar reasons, advises caution.

The complex and detailed historical conclusions based on Meremoth hang on a very thin thread. What can be ascertained is that Ezra 8:31–36 emphasizes Ezra's meticulous handling of the gifts by transferring them to local representatives. In doing so he likewise acknowledges the authority of the Jerusalem priesthood as custodians of the temple and its belongings. Ezra's relationship to the Jerusalem priesthood will come to the fore with the crisis of intermarriage that follows next in Ezra 9–10. A number of scholars hold that Nehemiah 8 directly followed at this juncture (e.g., Torrey [1896]], Myers [1965a], Williamson [1985]). While there are good reasons to consider Nehemiah 8 as part of an "Ezra story," interspersed to combine the work of the two leaders, there is no compelling reason to insert it here (for details, see "The Composition of Ezra 9–10" in Comments [9:1–15]).

Both 1 Esdras and Josephus follow the MT at this point. Josephus condenses the account of the preparation in Ezra 8 but stays with the basic points, omitting names, before moving to the arrival and conclusions that parallel Ezra 8:31–36. Only then does he itemize the gifts, with numbers slightly more modest than those in Ezra 8 but still exorbitant (*Ant.* XI.136–38). Like EN and 1 Esdras, he then turns to the issues of mixed marriages (Ezra 9).

Having fulfilled part of his mission, Ezra in EN will next confront an obstacle, much as did the builders of the temple in Ezra 4 after their initial success. The obstacle takes the form of marriages with the peoples of the land(s).

C. The Obstacle: Marriages with the Peoples of the Lands (9:1–15)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra 9, the final section of the Ezra Memoir, describes the obstacle to Ezra's mission in Stage Two of reconstruction (Ezra 7–10): the crisis of marriages with women from the "peoples of the lands." As in Stage One (Ezra 3–6) and the later Stage Three (Neh 1–7), the obstacle includes setting boundaries by rejecting "outsiders," thereby shaping and defining the identity of the people who build God's house. Ezra learns about certain marriages (Ezra 9:1–2). His mourning (9:3–5) and prayer (9:6–15) illustrate his conviction that these marriages gravely endanger the community. Surprisingly, Ezra takes no disciplinary action against the offenders (even though Artaxerxes' letter authorizes him to do so).

Some details are vague, but Ezra 9 puts forth three ideas that will have long-term consequences: (1) marriage is not simply a "private" or family matter; (2) marriage affects the relationship with God and sanctity; and (3) exogamy (marriage with outsiders) should be opposed. Ezra 9 does not identify the ethnicity of the peoples of the lands (the word "foreign" does not appear) or oppose all contacts with them. The objection focuses on marriage.

Several key questions require scrutiny: First, what exactly does EN claim about these marriages, and what objections does it raise? Second, who are these "peoples of the lands," and what (according to Ezra 9) makes them objectionable? Third, what is meant by "the seed of the *qōdeš*" (Ezra 9:2)? Fourth, to what extent is the episode historical? Fifth, why does Ezra respond as he does? Each of these issues, along with the composition of Ezra 9–10, is discussed in the Comments (9:1–15).

Surprisingly, most scholars treat the controversy about so-called intermarriage in Ezra 9–10 as historically reliable, even if embellished. They date the event to different periods from 458 to 398 BCE and to the Hellenistic era. As to the reasons for the conflict, some, like Milgrom (1976), Klawans (2000), Hayes (2002), and Olyan (2004), concentrate on issues of purity. Others concentrate on social and economic factors at work, such as ethnicity (Southwood 2012; so too Dyck 1998), class (Smith-Christopher 1994), land rights (Eskenazi 2006), covenant (Bautch 2008), and law (Japhet 1988, 2007).

It is widely held (for good reasons) that Nehemiah 8 originally belonged with Ezra 7–10, but discerning the original sequence is challenging. Torrey (1896, 31–32) claimed

that Nehemiah 8 originally stood between Ezra 8 and Ezra 9–10. Many scholars today concur (see Williamson 1985, 127–28; Japhet 2019; Yoo 2017). The LXX, however, follows the MT. So too do 1 Esdras and Josephus at this juncture.

As it stands, Ezra 9–10 fits the general structure of EN, where each of the three stages of reconstruction of life in Judah follows the same narrative arc: an introduction (Ezra 7), the successful beginning of the mission (Ezra 8), unexpected obstacles/crisis (Ezra 9), and resolution (Ezra 10). In the MT, the narrative then follows with Stage Three (Neh 1–7), describing Nehemiah's contribution to building God's house.

The structure of Ezra 9:1–15 is as follows:

1. The obstacle discovered (9:1–2)
2. Ezra's response (9:3–15)

I. THE OBSTACLE DISCOVERED (9:1–2)

9 [1]And when these were finished, the chiefs approached me saying, "The people Israel, and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, in their abominations like the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. [2]For they have taken up some of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and the consecrated seed has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; and the hand of the chiefs and officials has been first in this sacrilege."

Introduction

Ezra describes in retrospect the challenging news that confronted him: leading Judean men married women from the peoples of the lands. To Ezra, these marriages threaten communal survival in the land. At stake are also the nature of the community and its relationship to God.

Notes

9:1. *And when these were finished.* Ezra, according to the canonical arrangement, had arrived in the fifth month (Ezra 7:9) of King Artaxerxes' seventh year (either in 458 or 398 BCE). The assembly to resolve the conflict convened in the ninth month (10:9).

Torrey (1896, 31–32; 1910, 253–55) and many scholars since have concluded that Nehemiah 8 (with the reading of the *torah* in the seventh month) originally followed Ezra 8 (see also Rudolph 1949, 143; Clines 1984, 180–81; Williamson 1985, xxx; Blenkinsopp 1988, 174; Pakkala 2004; and Japhet 2019, 222–23). In this reconstruction of the presumed original story, the public reading of the *torah* in Nehemiah 8 "pricked their leaders' consciences into bringing their confession to Ezra" (Williamson 1985, 127). If so, the present event took place around the eighth month; Ezra's total activities (Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8), then, were compressed into a little more than a year. However, while there is compelling evidence to show that Nehemiah 8 originally belonged with Ezra 7–10, there is no decisive evidence for placing it before Ezra 9. The earliest versions all place the reading in Nehemiah 8 after the conflict in Ezra 9–10. The LXX follows the MT. First Esdras 9:37–54 and Josephus (*Ant.* XI.153–54 // XI.v.4–5) follow the MT here but place the reading of the *torah* directly

after the events of Ezra 9–10. Ezra 9 makes no mention of the *torah* (even though Ezra virtually quotes it in 9:10–12). The narrative leaves open the possibility that ignorance of the *torah's* teaching may have led some to violate it inadvertently. Ezra therefore explained the problem and helped resolve it (Ezra 9–10). In the canonical sequence thirteen more years passed before Ezra publicly introduces the *torah* for ratification by the community (Neh 8–10).

the chiefs approached me saying. Leaders seem divided regarding the relationship with those in the land (chiefs belong to both groups: informers and accused). The leaders here, presumably laypeople, may be members of Ezra's own entourage or those who came to Judah earlier. They turn to Ezra; he does not seek them out. Ezra 9–10 consistently portrays Ezra in Jerusalem as reactive rather than proactive, despite his established Persian authority (cf. Nehemiah, who reports that he himself discovered intermarriages; Neh 13:23–27).

chiefs. Heb. *śārîm.* The term indicates officially appointed leaders, either military, judicial, or cultic appointees; Moses appoints such chiefs in Exod 18:21–25 to adjudicate cases. Ezra 8:24 and 10:5 refer to chiefs of priests and Levites. In Nehemiah 3, *śārîm* include chief administrators of districts. Conceivably, the term designated a specific hierarchical niche, but the fluidity of such bureaucratic terms precludes precision. There is no reason to suppose with Fried (2015a, 360–61) that *śārîm* refers to Persian officers (also Becking 2018, 139). Persian authorities show no interest in intermarriage (see, e.g., *TAD* B 2.6 // Cowley 15 and *TAD* B 3.3 // Kraeling 2, where intermarriages are contracted with no official Persian presence).

The people Israel, and the priests and the Levites. Representatives from the whole community are implicated. The culpability of some priests will entail special measures (Ezra 10:18–19).

have not separated themselves. This is the chief accusation. The verb *b.d.l.,* "to separate," in EN and the rest of the Hebrew Bible typically indicates separation for a holy task (but see Gen 1). In Ezra 6:21, some in the land join newcomers from Babylonia by separating from the nations in the land. Separation, then, becomes a defining term for membership in the postexilic community. Ezra 9:1–2 refers to those who failed to separate themselves (see full discussion at Ezra 8:24 and the Comments there and Comments [9:1–15]). While separation does not automatically disparage the group from which one separates (see, e.g., 10:16), in the present case it pertains to avoiding dangerous liaisons.

from the peoples of the lands. The LXX uses the plural of *laos* for these people, typically reserving *ethnos* for foreign people or for the Hebrew term *gôy* (as in Ezra 6:21). Who were these people and why the separation? Are they the feared "peoples of the lands" in Ezra 3:3?, the rebuffed "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" in 4:1–5?, the "nations of the land" in 6:21?, or all of them? First Esdras 8:69 adds "alien" to *ethnos.* Used only seven other times in the Bible, "peoples of the lands" is confined to EN (Ezra 3:3, 9:1, 9:2, 9:11; Neh 9:30, 10:29) and Chronicles (2 Chr 13:9, 32:13). Ezra and his informants in Ezra 9:6–15 do not mention the ethnicity of these peoples. Ezra 9:1–2 compares them with early inhabitants in the land. While Ezra 10 focuses on women labeled "foreign," Ezra 9:1–2 focuses on their problematic practices, not their identities or origin.

Texts about Israel's earlier periods, including early postexilic ones, use "people of the land" (singular) to refer to local residents, including members of the community (as in Hag 2:4 and Zech 7:5), at times the nobility or landowners (as in 2 Kgs 23:30 and Jer 52:25). These meanings persist in Chronicles (see, e.g., 2 Chr 23:20–21). But the plural, used here, implies foreign nations in both 2 Chr 13:9 and 32:13, the two occurrences outside EN.

Fried (2006) regards the "the people of the land" as Judeans who remained in Judah throughout the Babylonian period and "the peoples of the land(s)" as the surrounding nations. But Knoppers (2009a, 164) observes that in Ezra, "those who are neither repatriates nor their descendants are referred to as 'the people of the land(s)' . . . or 'the peoples of the land(s).'" EN apparently uses the expression as a wide brush to paint a number of ethnicities (see Comments [9:1–15]).

in their abominations like the Canaanites. The LXX omits "like," and thus the simile. Several translations equate the current peoples of the lands with the specified nations listed in this verse. Thus, the NRSV has "have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites." First Esdras 8:69 does likewise. Blenkinsopp (1988, 174) has "have not kept themselves apart from the local populations and the abominations of the Canaanites." The MT, however, differentiates contemporary peoples of the lands from such earlier nations. It equates only their practices. This distinction is key to EN's interpretation: Ezra 9–10 applies past laws innovatively to new circumstances. Ezra 9–10 never identifies these people's ethnicity. Neither does Ezra 9 refer to them as "foreign." The indirect language contributes to the conclusion that the group included Judeans and Israelites who behaved like such nations and therefore needed to be shunned. At issue is also whether laws that proscribed certain nations in the time of Moses and Joshua apply to the present and include other nations as well.

Williamson (1985, 125) preserves the simile, translating "but have acted according to the abominations of the Canaanites." He distinguishes two distinct violations: not separating (i.e., marriage) and adopting the religious practices of the local inhabitants (ibid., 130). Arguably, the two are inseparable for EN.

in their abominations. The informants allege practices that are like those of Israel's ancient enemies. Laird (2016, 305) is not quite right when she claims that "what specifically makes the present-day peoples of the lands unacceptable remains obscure." The language is clear: abominations are the problem. Abominations in Leviticus primarily refer to sexual violations by the former inhabitants of the land (Lev 18, esp. 18:27).

"Abomination" in Deuteronomy primarily means worship of other gods and related practices (see, e.g., Deut 7:25–26, 12:30–31, 13:13–15, 17:1–4, 27:15, 32:15–18). Deuteronomy objects to several of these peoples because their abominations will lead Israel astray (Deut 7:1–4, 20:17–18). The overt influence of Deuteronomy on EN, exemplified by the names of nations here and in near quotations in Ezra 9:11–12 and Neh 13:1–3, implies the same associations here. Deuteronomy, accusing the inhabitants of the land of idolatry (Deut 20:17; cf. Ezra 9:1), warns that they would influence the Israelites with their abominations (Deut 7:1–4, 20:18). It demands their destruction (see also Deut 7:25–26 and 12:30–31). Their abominations caused their removal from the land (Deut 18:12; compare the risk of losing the land in Ezra 9:10–15). Deuteronomy 17:2–7 demands taking out offenders who practice abominations and stoning them. Shecaniah

proposes taking out the foreign women (Ezra 10:3), and Ezra 10:18–19 reports that four priests from the leading priestly family agreed to "take out" their foreign wives.

Ezekiel, who mentions "abomination(s)" more often than any biblical text (44 times of a total 112 in the Bible), also uses the term to describe worship of other deities (e.g., Ezek 8). He includes social and economic violations as well (e.g., Ezek 18:12–13) filling the entire land (Ezek 8:17). Very likely Ezra 9:1 conveys similar associations. In Ezekiel, the practitioners of these abominations are Judeans. Ezra 9:1–2 (like Ezra's prayer in 9:6–15) may have the same view.

the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites . . . the Amorites. As is typical of lists, each nation is designated by a singular masculine noun designating a collective (hence the plural in translation). The list reflects two separate Deuteronomic texts, forging a new typology. It both expands a ban and also neutralizes some of its sting by not demanding these people's demise or expulsion from the land.

These five nations appear in Deut 7:1–5 among seven with whom marriage or peaceable relation is prohibited (see also Deut 20:17). Whereas God in Exod 3:17 promises to displace these nations by giving the land to Israel, Deuteronomy demands that they be destroyed and shunned lest they turn Israel away from God (Deut 7:4). Most of them, however, had disappeared by the Persian period. Deuteronomy emphasizes the power of these nations and the threat that they will pose to small Israel. Ezra 9:2–15 likewise underscores the vulnerability of the Judean community. According to Neh 9:8, God gave the land of these nations to Abraham.

Fishbane (1988, 116) observes that "the leaders of the returning 'community of exiles' thus wanted to impress upon Ezra the similarity between their situation and that of the first Israelite settlers during the conquest of Canaan." Yet EN also offers an alternative to Joshua's mode of securing religious and national safety. Instead of waging war against these nations or seeking to obliterate them, Ezra in EN resorts to separation, by erecting strong social and religious boundaries. With that he both implements and reinterprets Deuteronomy.

the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites. The term "Canaanites" in the Bible refers to the early inhabitants of Canaan whom Israel was to replace, as well as to those along the coast extending to Lebanon, eventually referred to as Phoenicians. Hittites get their name from the kingdom in eastern Anatolia. The Perizzites usually appear with the Canaanites. Ishida (1979) suggests that they are non-Semitic Canaanites. The Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem before King David captured it (1 Sam 5:6). Deuteronomy 7:1–6 demands the destruction of these four nations and their cults.

the Ammonites, the Moabites. These two nations have been added to a stereotypical list of Israel's ancient forerunners in the land. Unlike the preceding groups, these two were contemporaneous with Persian-period Judah. Located to the east, across the Jordan River in today's Jordan, the two nations usually feature in the Bible as adversaries. There was no call in the *torah* to dispossess them. The meager material evidence shows close cultural ties between these Semitic groups and Israel, and so does the Bible. Genesis 19 describes Ammonites and Moabites as offspring born through incest to Lot, Abraham's nephew. The story highlights the ambivalent attitude toward them as both "kin" and "other." Yet Ammon and Moab provide a haven for escaping Judeans during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (Jer 40:11). Very little is known about these two nations during the Persian period.

According to Deut 23:4 [NRSV 23:3], "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the congregation of YHWH. Even to the tenth generation, none of theirs shall enter the congregation of YHWH ever." Nehemiah 13:1–3 virtually quotes Deut 23:4–7 as a basis for excluding people from the congregation. Although Deut 23:4–7 permanently excludes Ammonites and Moabites from the congregation, it does not demand their extinction. The issues and rationale for their exclusion also differ from those concerning Canaanites in Deut 7:1–6. Supposing an established text of *torah* behind Ezra 9:11–12, Fishbane (1988, 120–21) identifies exegetical dynamics at work: Ammonites and Moabites were "doubly tainted—because of the incest in their own past, and by virtue of their (exegetical) association with the ancient Canaanites (who had similar practices). . . . And so they were expelled from the community—through a combination of exegetical blends, textual allusions, and formal parallels."

Deuteronomy 23:4–7 does not mention marriage. But Tigay (1996, 479) concludes regarding Ammonites and Moabites in Deut 23:4–9 that "while 'may not be admitted into the *kahal* of the LORD' does not mean 'may not marry an Israelite,' it implies it." Numbers 25:1–2 reports that Moabite women lured Israel's men into flagrant idolatry, with disastrous consequences. First Kings 11:1–2 lists these two nations among dangerous marriage partners. But other biblical texts go out of their way to include members of these two nations. The exemplary Ruth the Moabite is King David's great-grandmother (Ruth 4). Solomon's wife and the mother of his successor is Ammonite (1 Kgs 14:31). These traditions place Ammonite and Moabite mothers at the very foundations of the Davidic lineage.

Ammonites and Moabites seem to pose special problems in EN. Nehemiah calls his opponent Tobiah, "the Ammonite servant" (Neh 2:10). He decries the harm caused by Ammonite and Moabite wives (Neh 13:23–27).

Conflating the two different groups of nations from Deuteronomy (Deut 7:1–4 and 23:4–9 [NRSV 23:3–8]), Ezra 9:1–2 extends the list of prohibited marriage partners, but it demands social and religious exclusion rather than extermination by war.

Although Deut 23:4–9 permanently excludes Ammonites and Moabites from the congregation, rabbinic sources limit the exclusion to men. They use the collective singular masculine form of the nouns in Deuteronomy to say that the law does not apply to females (see, e.g., *Ruth Rabbah* 2.9 and a discussion in Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky 2012, xxxviii–xlviii).

the Egyptians. Deuteronomy does not forbid marriage between Israelites and Egyptians. Third-generation offspring of such unions can join the community (Deut 23:8–9 [ET 23:7–8]). For an Israelite-Egyptian marriage, see Lev 24:10–23. But 1 Kgs 11:1–4 includes an Egyptian wife when accusing Solomon of apostasy (note Solomon's foreign wives in Neh 13:26). Fifth-century BCE marriage contracts from Elephantine include marriages between Judeans and Egyptians that are deemed acceptable in that Judean community (see, e.g., *TAD* B 2.6 // Cowley 15; *TAD* B 3.3 // Kraeling 2).

the Amorites. Amorites appear among the seven prohibited nations in Deut 7:1. Genesis 15:16 links the Amorites with a delay in Israel returning to the land, and Josh 7:10 includes them with those in the land. These Northwest Semitic people settled in Mesopotamia where they became prominent in the second millennium BCE. Their political and cultural traditions left a strong imprint on Mesopotamian civilization. King Hammurabi belonged to that dynasty.

First Esdras 8:69 has "Edomites," possibly adapting the prohibition to its Hellenistic time when Edomites occupied areas formerly belonging to Judah. The difference between the two words in Hebrew is slight. Blenkinsopp (1988, 174) follows 1 Esdras.

9:2. *For they have taken up some of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, and the consecrated seed has intermingled with the peoples of the lands.* Having provided a simile to situate transgression, the leaders now describe the consequences: adverse impact on those consecrated to Israel's God. Marrying outsiders and adopting their practices are, in theory, two separate acts. Ezra 9:1–2 weds them into a single, inevitable causal chain, ignoring the impact of social, political, or economic factors on religious laxity.

taken up. The Hebrew has a single word here, *nāśĕʾû,* from *n.ś.ʾ*. The LXX has *elabosan,* "they took," the common term for marriage in the Bible. But the Hebrew verb *n.ś.ʾ*. usually means "to carry" or "to lift" (e.g., Gen 50:13 or Num 1:50), and also "to support" (e.g., Ezra 1:4), in the more than six hundred times it appears in the Bible. In the Bible, this verb refers to marriage nine times, all, with the exception of Judg 21:23, in postexilic texts (Ruth 1:4; Ezra 9:2, 12; 10:44; Neh 13:25; 2 Chr 11:21; 13:21; 24:3), replacing the common terms for marriage, namely, "give" and "take." Later Rabbinic traditions, however, use *n.ś.ʾ*. as one of the main terms in marriage procedures.

Biblical sources typically describe a man taking a wife, or a father giving his daughter as wife, without information as to what else made such unions legal and binding. Genesis 24 and Ruth 4:9–13 come the closest to describing biblical aspects of betrothal and marriage ceremonies. Deuteronomy 21:10–14 does offer some details, but only for marriage with a captive woman, presumably a foreigner. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 enables a husband to divorce his wife unilaterally for any reason. He has to give her a "certificate of divorce" (so the NRSV). There is no mention of compensation. Deuteronomy 25:5–10 describes remarriage procedures regarding a childless widow. Three texts mention *mōhar,* a gift from the groom to the wife's family (Gen 34:12, Exod 22:16, 1 Sam 18:25).

The most detailed information about Judean marriage practices comes from the community in Elephantine, Egypt (fifth century BCE). In seven Judean marriage contracts from Elephantine, the groom takes or receives a wife from her male relative. The contracts list what the woman brings with her. Some mention *mōhar,* which the groom gives but loses if he divorces his wife (see, e.g., *TAD* B 3.8.4, 15, 25 // Kraeling 15). Either spouse can divorce the other without showing cause. The initiator must pay a fixed sum (the same amount in all contracts), and the woman retrieves whatever she brought to the marriage. Male witnesses sign the contract. Babylonian marriage contracts likewise are issued by the groom. But in contrast to Elephantine, they do not make it easy for women to initiate divorce (see, e.g., Roth 1989). These marriage contracts illustrate that marital unions were matters for families. They include witnesses but unlike modern marriages do not depend on another official body to legalize them. EN's "intervention" in matters of marriage, then, is striking.

Written contracts, however, do not seem to be a constant feature of marriage in preserved Babylonian archives. Roth (1989, 26–28) illustrates that they were drawn typically only to address special situations. Presumably, norms were sufficiently consistent otherwise. If so, available records offer only limited information about common practices and expectations.

some of their daughters. Ezra 9 does not mention Judean women marrying outsiders; Judean women in fifth-century BCE Elephantine apparently did. Silence concerning Judean women at this juncture could reflect two possible historical realities and ideological concerns: either women married only within the group or Ezra and EN did not consider marriages of women with outsiders to pose the same danger to the community.

If only men actually married outsiders, one wonders, why? Shortage of women is one plausible explanation (see Eskenazi and Judd 1994); special incentives for men to marry outsiders may be another (see Camp 1985 and 2000). Possibly, women had greater strictures and so did not have the options that men did in choosing their spouses. Perhaps the threat to the community was deemed less severe when Judean women married outsiders because such women moved into their husbands' households and no longer influenced the community. We are not in a position to determine what best accounts for the silence about Judean women marrying the "peoples of the lands." We know, however, that one Judean woman in EN was married to a man Nehemiah considered an outsider: the wife of Tobiah's son (Neh 6:18).

the consecrated seed has intermingled. The situation is cast in theological, cultic, and biological terms with sexual allusions. This unusual expression combines several traditional ideas in a new way. Among other things, it moves marriage from the realm of social or economic transaction into an encounter with the sacred.

the consecrated seed. Heb. *zeraʿ haqqōdeš,* the seed that belongs to the holy, a dedicated seed, not an intrinsically holy seed. The LXX has *sperma to hagion.* Ezra 9:2 casts marriage as a relationship to the holy. As Ezra 8:28 shows, something becomes *qōdeš* by being dedicated to the temple or God, regardless of origin. Thus, vessels donated by the Persian king and others in Babylonia become *qōdeš* when dedicated as an offering to God (Ezra 8:28). Like these vessels, the seed (a collective term for the people) is meant to be dedicated to the holy.

Most translations and interpreters, however, render *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* as "the holy seed" (e.g., NRSV; Williamson 1985, 125), usually supposing that this refers to biologically or genealogically transmitted holiness. While possible, grammar and context challenge such reading. First, "holy seed" in Hebrew is *hazzeraʿ haqqādôš,* not *zeraʿ haqqōdeš.* The terms have different meanings. Second, as most scholars agree, people in the land included Judeans who had not been exiled. As such, they constitute the same "seed" and could boast the same genealogies or genes as the repatriated. Ezra 9:2 does not focus genealogy as the basic criterion for membership. Rather, it renders such identity as "seed" insufficient, adding behavior as decisive, namely, dedication to the holy (as EN defines it). The semantic range of the *haqqōdeš,* especially in EN, supports such a reading. As noted, Ezra himself uses *qōdeš* for various vessels once they are dedicated to the temple (Ezra 8:28). Jerusalem becomes the city of the *qōdeš* only after the people dedicate themselves to God, the *torah,* and the temple (Neh 11:1 and 18).

The charge against the peoples of the lands (and those who marry them), then, is their actions (abominations), not so much (or primarily) their genes (some in the land possess the same gene pool, as it were). In Ezra 9, the people Israel is meant to be consecrated, "dedicated to a sacred purpose" (as Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "consecrate"); improper marriages violate that dedication (see the Comments below).

seed. Like most of the Bible and the ANE, EN presumes genealogical relation as a primary aspect of belonging to a community. The term "seed" (a collective noun) expresses this view. Nehemiah 9:2 refers to the "seed of Israel" as the community that separates from the foreign. Bautch (2016, 535), who identifies four basic usages of "seed" in the Bible, notes that agricultural and human connotations are the most prominent. Human "seed" typically refers to progeny, "offspring." The conjunction of "seed" and *qōdeš* appears only here and in MT Isa 6:13, where it is *zeraʿ qōdeš* (thus without the definite article). This reference is missing from LXX Isa 6:13 but is included in the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran, 1QIsa, as *zrʿ hqwdš* (*zeraʿ haqqōdeš*), more like Ezra 9:2 than MT Isa 6:13.

In Ezra 9:2 and Isa 6:13 the seed refers specifically to offspring as remnant, surviving after a disaster. In Isaiah, this consecrated seed is what remains after the trees are destroyed. Ezra 9:2 communicates a similar sense, referring to the present community; Ezra will soon describe the community as *pĕlêṭâ,* "survivors" (see Ezra 9:8, 13, 14, 15). Saysell (2012) concludes that it refers to future progeny. More likely it refers to Ezra's generation, especially given the use of "seed" in Neh 9:2.

The language of "seed" also connotes smallness and fragility yet full of future potential, which both Isa 6:13 and Ezra 9:2 communicate. As Ezra interprets the situation (Ezra 9:6–15), apostasy puts the seed's future in grave danger.

The sexual sense implied in the term "seed" cannot be ignored in Ezra 9:1–2, a text about marriage. Ezra 9:1–2 (like the subsequent prayer in Ezra 9:6–15) blends agricultural, sexual, and cultic images, closely connecting women and land. Parallel associations in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel convey similar messages in which women become a possible source of contamination to be specially guarded against.

intermingled. The LXX has *parēchthē,* "has passed among." The plural verb refers to the "seed," indicating its meaning as a collective term. This Hebrew term is used for mingling with other nations in Psalm 106, in a context that echoes EN's concern: "They did not destroy the nations as YHWH had commanded them, but mixed themselves with the nations and learned their ways" (Ps 106:34–35). Again, apostasy is the issue (Ps 106:36–37). Concern with "bad company" appears also in Proverbs by means of this term (Prov 14:10, 20:19, 24:21). Possible allusion to messages such as those in Lev 19:19, against mixing seed, may be at work (so, e.g., Southwood 2012, 129). Sexual innuendos are at play as well, put in the service of separation from threatening alliances.

the hand of the chiefs and officials has been first in this sacrilege. Proclivity for intermarriage among the upper classes is familiar from ancient and modern societies and confirmed by sociological analyses of marriage patterns (see Eskenazi and Judd 1994 and the study of Della Pergola mentioned there; see also studies of intermarriage such as Rosenfeld 2008). Privileged classes' relative freedom from ordinary social constraints contributes to crossing boundaries. Such actions by leaders are likely to pose the greater danger to perceived communal cohesion. Possibly, however (if the scene is historical), the leaders in Ezra 9:1–2 were not flagrantly aiming to defy tradition but were ignorant of it. Perhaps they subscribed to a different understanding of the tradition than Ezra's supporters. Some very likely regarded peoples in the land as kin, and with good reasons, since the land included Judeans and Israelites who had not been exiled. EN's elliptical language, with no mention of "foreign," points in that direction. First Esdras 8:70 has

"from the beginning of this matter the leaders and the nobles have been sharing in this iniquity."

chiefs. The accusation against leaders comes from other leaders.

officials. The LXX omits the term. The NRSV has "leaders" and NJPS has "prefects." This category of prominent officeholders appears most frequently in the Nehemiah Memoir (e.g., Neh 2:16a; 4:8, 13; 5:7; 7:5; 13:11), typically paired with other leaders, usually in a secondary position; thus "deputies" is also possible. There is no basis for presuming a reference to Persian officials (*pace* Fried 2015a, 366).

sacrilege. Heb. *maʿal.* The LXX has *asynthesia.* Commenting on Lev 5:15, Milgrom (1991, 320) describes *maʿal* as "a legal term for the wrong that is redressed by the *ʾāšām* offering. . . . It is never defined in the Bible. Unfortunately, comparative philology is useless." However, the study of the forty-four cases of *maʿal* in the Bible leads Milgrom (1976a, 236) to describe the term as "trespass upon the sancta and the violation of the covenant oath." Context includes inadvertent violations of God's *sancta* (Lev 5:15b), most often by apostasy and idolatry. This word typically suggests unfaithfulness to God, which EN implies as the story unfolds. Once, it also refers to a woman's unfaithfulness to her husband (Num 5:12, 27); marital violation may hover in the background here as well. The notion of trespass fits well as the term for violating the nature of the community as *qōdeš,* belonging to God.

Blenkinsopp (1988, 176) connects this term with the Chronicler. Yet marriage with outsiders does not carry in Chronicles the negative meaning that it does in EN. Thus, Williamson (1985, 128) holds that *maʿal* in Ezra 9:2 and 9:4 "is used in ways significantly different from that in Chronicles" (see also Williamson 1977, 49, 53). The term is arguably evidence for the difference between EN and Chronicles.

To conclude: Ezra 9:1–2 raises objections to marriage with women from the peoples of the lands without saying who these people are. The language of sacrilege in Ezra 9:1–2 makes these particular unions a violation of the relation with God, given the abominations they introduce. Calling certain marriages "sacrilege" puts marriage itself in the realm of cultic behavior. This perspective differs from the general view (and practice) of marriage in the Bible and the ancient world in which it was primarily a contractual matter between families.

2. Ezra's Response (9:3–15)

9 [3]And upon my hearing this thing, I tore my garment and mantle; and I plucked hair from my head and beard, and sat desolate. [4]And unto me gathered every one trembling at the words of the God of Israel concerning the sacrilege of the exile; and I was sitting desolate until the evening grain offering.

[5]And at the evening grain offering I rose up from my self-affliction and my tearing my garment and my mantle, and I dropped to my knees, and spread out my palms to YHWH my God. [6]And I said: "My God, I am ashamed and mortified to lift up, my God, my face toward you, for our iniquities increased to above the head, and our guilt has grown to the heavens. [7]From the days of our fathers we have been in great guilt, to this day; and in our iniquities we were given—we, our kings, our priests—into the hands of the kings of the lands, by the sword, by captivity, and by plunder, and by shamefacedness, as on this day. [8]And now, for almost a moment there was for us favor

from YHWH our God to let there remain for us survivors, and to give us a stake in his consecrated place, to illumine our eyes, our God, and to give us a little sustenance in our servitude. [9]For we are slaves, and in our servitude our God has not forsaken us; and he bestowed upon us generous love before the kings of Persia to give us sustenance, to raise up the house of our God and to restore its ruins, and to give us a fence in Judah and in Jerusalem.

[10]"And now, what can we say, our God, after this? For we have forsaken your commandments [11]that you commanded by the hand of your servants the prophets, saying: 'The land that you are coming to inherit is a land of blood pollution/menstruation with the blood pollution/menstruation of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that filled her from mouth to mouth with their impurity. [12]And now, your daughters do not give to their sons, and their daughters do not take up for your sons, and you shall not seek out their peace and their well-being ever, in order that you will be strengthened and eat the good of the land, and bequeath [it] to your sons forever.' [13]And after all that has come upon us through our evil deeds and our great guilt—for you, our God, had held back some of our iniquities, and gave us survivors such as these—[14]shall we return to thwart your commandments and to wed these peoples of abominations? Will you not rage against us and bring complete destruction, with no remnant and survivors? [15]YHWH, God of Israel, you are righteous, for we remain survivors as of this day; here we are before you in our guilt, for there is no standing before you on account of this."

Introduction and Structure

Ezra's twofold response to the news in Ezra 9:1–2—mourning and then praying in public—communicates his utter shock and the gravity of the crisis. His actions prove an effective catalyst for communal response. The prayer interprets for his audience the meaning of the transgression and explains his mortification. According to Ezra, marriages with peoples of the lands had caused Israel's greatest disasters in the past (Ezra 9:7) and threaten to do the same again.

In contrast to the instructions in Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:12–26), Ezra does not investigate, charge, or pursue the so-called offenders. Instead, having set his heart to teach Israel (7:10), Ezra exemplifies public teaching through persuasion and personal example, weaving a complex web of ideas to vividly illustrate the danger he perceives.

Ezra's prayer is one of several in EN. Like the other biblical prose prayers that grow in frequency in the postexilic period (Newman 1999), it contains several traditional elements. Milgrom (1976b, 72; 1991, 358–61) calls it a legal midrash (see also Dor 2003, 47).

Like Nehemiah 9, Ezra's prayer (usually labeled his "confession"; see Ezra 10:1), frames the present with a history of human transgression and divine generosity. However, unlike confessions such as those in Nehemiah 9 and Daniel 9, or penitential psalms of lament, Ezra 9:6–15 does not include a request for forgiveness, supplication, or promise of restitution. Instead, Ezra seems to provoke/goad the community to offer a proper conclusion to the prayer. As Ezra 10 shows, Ezra succeeds in eliciting such a resolution.

Several scholars regard Ezra's prayer as a distinct source (Williamson 1985, 128; Dor 2003). Most scholarly attention focuses on the prayer's interpretation of other

biblical teachings (Ezra 9:10–12) and on discerning what is wrong about marriages with women from "the peoples of the lands," and why (see COMMENTS [9:1–15]).

The structure of Ezra 9:3–15 is as follows:

1. Ezra's initial response: mourning (9:3–5)
2. Ezra's public prayer (9:6–15)
    a. Address (9:6)
    b. Description of Israel's history as transgression and God's unfailing generosity (9:7–9)
    c. The present transgression (9:10–14)
    d. Conclusion: Affirmation of God's righteousness (9:15)

Notes

9:3. *And upon my hearing this thing, I tore my garment and mantle; and I plucked hair from my head and beard, and sat desolate.* The LXX replaces "mantle" with *epallomēn,* from "to shake." Ezra uses mourning rituals to express his view of the gravity of the violation. The scene provides rare yet vivid glimpses of demonstrative grief and its consequences. Ezra, a venerated leader, sits publicly for hours in shock, his clothes rent, his hair and beard plucked and disheveled. He allows everyone to witness his anguish and to contemplate their response. Tearing clothes and pulling one's hair are both natural and formal expressions of great grief in the Bible and the ANE. King Josiah similarly rends his clothes when the book of the *torah* (which the community had presumably violated) is read to him (2 Kgs 22:11). Sitting silently is likewise a sign of grief (Job 2:13).

Modern images of public grief as protest come to mind, such as Gandhi's public fasts that aimed to influence and change laws. Ezra 9–10 depicts Ezra successfully doing something similar for his time and place, leading to changed policies regarding exogamy.

Ezra's response may also be not so much "an expression of personal grief as an attempt to act representatively on behalf of all the people" (Williamson 1985, 132). Either an expression of actual shock or a calculated public gesture to communicate dismay, Ezra's actions are consistent with his style elsewhere in this book. He does not exercise his official (Persian) authority. Ezra "used no direct coercion, but rather he encouraged the people to see the problem for themselves and to formulate their own response. . . . However, his actions would have been partly intended to assist this process" (ibid., 133). Josephus identifies a practical consideration: "as he reasoned that if he commanded them to put away their wives . . . , he would not be listened to, he remained lying on the ground" (*Ant.* XI.142 // XI.v.3). In light of King Artaxerxes' letter, authorizing Ezra to impose and punish (e.g., Ezra 7:26), Ezra's restraint takes on significant political implications: it constructs an internal mechanism for dealing with communal and religious challenges, eschewing the use of imperial power.

However one interprets Ezra's mourning, his reaction contrasts with Nehemiah's. Nehemiah attacks the intermarried offenders and plucks their hair (Neh 13:25); Ezra plucks his own hair and places guilt upon himself. The success of Ezra's approach is evident in what follows.

desolate. Heb. *mĕšômēm,* a *poel* participle that appears in the Bible only here, in Ezra 9:4, and again in Dan 9:27, where it refers to the abomination of desolation.

Elsewhere the verb evokes desolate cities or land (see, e.g., Ezek 33:28), a significant allusion, given Ezra's interpretation of this transgression (Ezra 9:6–15).

9:4. *And unto me gathered every one trembling at the words of the God of Israel concerning the sacrilege of the exile; and I was sitting desolate until the evening grain offering.* Ezra's public demonstration of extreme grief lasts until evening, giving people time to absorb and respond to his reaction. The results testify to his effectiveness.

gathered. The imperfect form of the verb suggests ongoing activity—"the crowd gradually continued to grow" (Williamson 1985, 126 n. 4a).

trembling. Heb. *ḥārēd.* References to those who tremble at God's word recur in Ezra 10:3, Isa 66:2, and Isa 66:5. Blenkinsopp (1988, 177–78) suggests that the term in both EN and Isaiah 66 designates the same, well-defined group of postexilic pietists: the group in Isaiah 66 represents a prophetic eschatological stance, and Ezra's principal support came from such a group. More likely, Ezra 9–10 represents a beginning of a group, albeit with no signs of eschatological orientation. Yoo (2017, 184–85) also considers a well-defined group, "members of the highest religious court," and connects the term to the experience at Sinai (Exod 19:16). But such specificity is unlikely (on parallels to the *haredim* in modern Israel, see Eskenazi and Judd 1994).

the sacrilege of the exile. The expected "sons" or "descendants" does not modify "exile" here as elsewhere (see Ezra 8:35). The narrator uses "exile" this way also in Ezra 10:8. Since some intermarried families in 10:18–43 do not appear in Ezra's entourage (8:1–14), the offenders include earlier returnees.

sacrilege. See at 9:2.

exile. Heb. *gôlâ,* a collective noun for the people or the place of exile. The NJPS uses "returning exiles." In Ezra 7–10 it most explicitly designates a community to which Ezra himself belongs. Vogt (1966, 43) represents a common view that for EN the *gôlâ* community constitutes the only genuine Israel. According to him, the *gôlâ* for Ezra is "all Israel" and includes only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (and Levi). They alone are the "holy seed" (ibid., 39–41). By the mid-fifth century BCE, many of those called *gôlâ,* exiles or returnees, may have been born in the land. Referring to them as *gôlâ* is thus polemical.

According to Japhet (2019, 228), Ezra's definition of the *gôlâ* testifies to the hegemony of the Judean returnees (see also Japhet 1983b). But others in the land join the returnees in Ezra 6:21, and 10:9 refers to all the men of Judah and Benjamin. Southwood (2012, 210–11) is on target when she considers the exile experience to be the driving force of the agenda in Ezra 9–10. Survival strategies that returning migrants developed in diaspora, she concludes, shape the policies and ethnic identity in Ezra 9–10. But the extent to which these policies could incorporate nonexiled Judeans remains a matter of scholarly debate. On the symbolic meaning of identifying as *gôlâ* late in the fifth century BCE, see Brett 2019, 86–96. First Esdras omits "exile."

I was sitting. The repetition underscores Ezra's commitment to displaying the gravity of the danger. The participial form of the verb indicates continuous action.

the evening grain offering. Regular offerings for the tabernacle included the *minḥâ* offering composed of grain and oil (e.g., Lev 6:7). Reference to rituals is a way of "clocking" time in the Bible (see Dan 9:21). At one level Ezra here provides practical information about the life setting of the prayer, namely, the *minḥâ* service as a temporal

designation. At a symbolic level, his subsequent prayer becomes an offering to God—one of several instances when prayer overshadows sacrifices in EN.

In Malachi, where *minḥâ* appears at a proportionately high rate (seven times), it stands for sacrificial offering in general (see, e.g., Mal 2:12). After the destruction of the second temple, the term comes to mean the late afternoon/early evening synagogue worship service.

9:5. *And at the evening grain offering I rose up from my self-affliction and my tearing my garment and my mantle, and I dropped to my knees, and spread out my palms to YHWH my God.* The picture of Ezra in deep mourning is reiterated, as too his contrite posture before God—and in full view of the community. EN had a role in the development of Jewish liturgical practices; b. Taanit 12b derives rules about communal penitence from this passage.

the evening grain offering. The repetition of the evening offering could be dittography but serves to underscore the time of Ezra's prayer and thereby its significance. In Dan 9:21, evening is a time of prayer.

my self-affliction. Heb. *taʿănîtî,* that is, my *taʿănît,* a *hapax legomenon* in the Bible but a frequent term in the later rabbinic literature. The LXX has *tapeinōseōs.* The Hebrew root *ʿ.n.h.* evokes humiliation and torment (e.g., Gen 16:6, Exod 22:21) as well as ritual self-affliction (e.g., Isa 58:5), thus Williamson's (1985, 125) "humiliation." Although many translations render the word "fasting," Ezra does not mention fasting here (in contrast to Ezra 8:21 and 10:6). In subsequent rabbinic literature *taanit* becomes the name of an important tractate in the Mishnah (elaborated upon in the Talmud) concerning fast days and public expression of communal grief.

mantle. First Esdras 8:71 has "sacred vestments," suggesting gratuitously that Ezra was officiating.

dropped to my knees. ANE iconography establishes kneeling as an expression of humility and subjugation before a superior (see the Jehu obelisk). Isaiah 45:23 makes it clear that kneeling, not bowing, is meant by *k.r.ʿ.,* here translated as "dropped." The term repeatedly conveys being vanquished (see Isa 65:12). While no single posture characterizes biblical prayer, kneeling is common. Solomon both kneels (1 Kgs 8:54) and stands (1 Kgs 8:22) during prayers of thanksgiving at the dedication of the temple. Kneeling in regular prayer was largely eliminated in later Jewish traditions.

spread out my palms. Hand gestures are a common feature of prayer in biblical texts (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:22, 38) and ancient iconography. Josephus retains this image ("stretching his hands toward heaven," *Ant.* XI.143 // XI.v.3), indicating that this gesture was recognized as a sign of prayer in the first century CE. Images of the subjugated with hands lifted and spread out (and on their knees) from the ancient temple of Karnak, Egypt (mid-thirteenth century BCE?) illustrate the antiquity of such gestures (see, e.g., Pritchard 2011, no. 89).

YHWH my God. The unusual "my" rather than "our" God, here and in Ezra 9:6, distances Ezra from the transgressing community even as it brings him close to God, whom he addresses by a personal name. Ezra will soon shift to the plural, linking himself with the offending community.

9:6. *And I said: "My God, I am ashamed and mortified to lift up, my God, my face toward you, for our iniquities increased to above the head, and our guilt has grown to the heavens.* Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:6–15) begins by emphasizing Ezra's relation to God and

Ezra's personal shame on account of communal guilt. It casts Ezra as a representative of the community ("our guilt"), a common feature in biblical prayers of confessions even when the speaker is not personally guilty (Williamson 1985, 134; see Neh 1:6, 9:33, and Dan 9:5–19).

My God . . . my God. The repetition expresses Ezra's intimate and personal bond with God. This intimacy soon expands to "our God" in vv. 8 (twice), 9 (twice), 10, and 13, just as "I" is replaced by "we."

above the head. This unusual idiom envisions guilt so enormous that it drowns people (resembling "over the top" in contemporary English).

guilt. Heb. *ʾašmâ.* Whereas "iniquities" is common in lists of transgressions in the Bible, "guilt" is relatively rare, appearing seventeen times in the entire Bible, with six in Ezra 9–10. Elsewhere it appears primarily in Leviticus and Chronicles. Laird (2016, 306) notes that while shame reflects helplessness, guilt "carries a sense of responsibility." Biblical *ʾašmâ* constitutes a specific kind of guilt with definite processes for restoring individuals or the community to a proper relation to God. Leviticus indicates that this root, *a.š.m.,* refers to guilt incurred inadvertently (see, e.g., Lev 4:3, 5:14–26), for which the required restitution is the *ʾāšām* offering, traditionally translated as "guilt offering" but more properly "reparation offering" (see Milgrom 1991, 339–45). This nuance helps identify an aspect of Ezra's reforms. The terminology implies ignorance (rather than deliberate violation) on the part of the men who contracted the opposed marriages. In Lev 22:16, guilt relates to desecrating holy things by indecent behavior and inappropriate crossing of boundaries. In 2 Chronicles, guilt incurs when Israelites take Judean women and men as booty (2 Chr 28:10) or worships other gods (2 Chr 24:18). See also Notes at Ezra 10:19.

9:7. *From the days of our fathers we have been in great guilt, to this day; and in our iniquities we were given—we, our kings, our priests—into the hands of the kings of the lands, by the sword, by captivity, and by plunder, and by shamefacedness, as on this day.* In one complex sentence, Ezra sums up Israel's whole history. Iniquities of ancestors caused shame and foreign oppression. The culprits encompass "we," all those present and their ancestors, especially the highest echelons ("our kings, our priests"). Note the absence of Levites.

our fathers. Ancestors in EN are mostly examples of transgression, not of merit, except for Abraham in Neh 9:7–8.

we were given. The passive construct avoids specifying God as the instigator of such a fate. Ezra describes an almost karmic chain of cause and effect, broken by God's unmerited mercy upon this remnant community.

our priests. The LXX omits "priests" and has instead "and our children." Ezra in EN challenges the priesthood of his day (see Notes at Ezra 10:18–19). His being a priest adds legitimacy to his ability to challenge them when necessary. Silence about Levites as transgressors adds plausibility to their role as authors or editors of EN.

into the hands of the kings of the lands. This allusion to foreign powers that alternately dominated the Levant and subjugated Israel and Judah most likely includes Persia as well.

by the sword, by captivity, and by plunder, and by shamefacedness. Military destruction, rather than religious or political oppression, is stressed. The book of Lamentations graphically describes the tragic fate of a people vanquished in war.

shamefacedness. Lit. "shame of the face." While shame might seem too mild to modern readers to deserve a place in a list of severe calamities of war, issues of honor and shame were culturally significant in the ancient world.

as on this day. Or "like this day." Ezra's description of present-day foreign oppression and humiliation is startling in light of traditions about the benevolent Persian government (and the privileges for the Judean community accorded to Ezra in Ezra 7:12–26). It can be a clue to the independent origin of the prayer (as, e.g., Dor [2003] supposes), but in its present location it shows that EN is not oblivious to the fact that colonial power is fundamentally repressive, no matter how benign. As Kuhrt (1983) observes, the dominant perceptions of Persian benevolence in biblical and other ancient sources reflect successful ancient propaganda. The Persian imperial court exploited its subject people just as did other empires and used its power brutally against those who resisted its demands. Although EN persistently appreciates imperial support for its agenda, "Ezra and his contemporaries were not unaware of the basic unacceptability of political subjection" (Blenkinsopp 1988, 183).

The prayer oscillates between past and present, beginning with "this day" (Ezra 9:7) and returning to that at the end (9:15). See also the prayer at Neh 9:10–32 where, again, the phrase functions as a framing device. The repetition of "as on this day" in Ezra 9 echoes Deuteronomy ("today" appears fifty-nine times in Deuteronomy). In Deuteronomy, "today" contemporizes the experience of the exodus, Sinai, and the covenant for the generation about to enter the land and highlights God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel.

9:8. *And now.* Heb. *wĕʿttâ,* an emphatic expression that usually implies "in light of all that."

for almost a moment. Heb. *kimʿaṭ regaʿ.* The LXX omits the expression and has instead "and now mercifully." Ezra emphasizes here, and throughout, the precarious position of the community.

favor. Heb. *tĕḥinnâ,* a noun that also means "grace" (Koren Jerusalem Bible), "mercy" (New American Bible), or "reprieve" (NJPS). These related qualities are formed from the verb *ḥ.n.n. tĕḥinnâ,* also related to *ḥēn* ("grace" or "favor"). The word *tĕḥinnâ* usually refers to prayer or petition, as in 1 Kgs 8:28–52, where it appears eight times. Here, and probably in Josh 11:20, it describes divine favor or mercy. Elsewhere (e.g., 2 Chr 6:35, Solomon's prayer in 1 Kgs 8, and Psalms), this noun refers to human supplications. In later Judaism, *teḥinas* becomes a technical term for a class of petitionary prayers, common especially among women.

to let there remain for us. This language underscores the notion of "remnant," a potent concept in the postexilic community (see Hausmann 1987, esp. 68–72).

survivors. Heb. *pĕlêṭâ,* a feminine noun (see Gen 45:5). The LXX has instead *sōtērian,* "salvation." The Hebrew is a collective noun, usually used for those who escaped and survived wars (Judg 21:17, Isa 37:31, 1 Chr 4:43), and is more graphic and specific than "a remnant" (used by the KJV, NRSV, Koren Jerusalem Bible, and Williamson 1985). The NJPS's "surviving remnant" and Blenkinsopp's (1988) "some survivors" better capture the fuller sense (Ezra 9:8, 13, 14, 15). Most of the references outside Ezra's prayer appear in Isaiah (Isa 10:20; 15:9; 37:31, 32). The fourfold repetition in Ezra 9:6–15 renders *pĕlêṭâ* a keyword in the prayer and a clue as to how more ambiguous terms like *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* in Ezra 9:2 are best understood. Ezra proclaims that those in

Judah are refugees whose precarious position is now once again at risk because of the current transgression. Japhet's (2006, 440–41) study of "remnant" in EN concludes that, in the context of Ezra 9–10, the term applies exclusively to the returned exiles. Obadiah 17 casts *pĕlêṭâ* as dedicated to the holy (*qōdeš*).

It comes as no surprise that a prominent representative of the postexilic community would describe his people as survivors of a disaster. Zechariah's description of Joshua as the "brand plucked from the fire" (Zech 3:2) may reflect the experience of many refugees, then and now. What surprises is that this is the first time that the idea is expressed with such force in EN, more than one hundred years after the Babylonian destruction and exile. Such expressions have encouraged scholars to look for more recent disasters (also in Neh 1) as an explanation. But national trauma can sustain its power to shock for decades and centuries (on political trauma, see Brett 2016; 2019, esp. 75–85).

to give us a stake. Heb. *yātēd* is a common term for stake or tent peg. The LXX has *stērigma.* The reference is to a stake used for pitching a tent. The tent peg conjures two different images at work. As an object sunk into the depth of the ground, it suggests a claim to securing possession of the land, staking a claim. But as support for tents (rather than foundation for houses), it also conjures precariousness and vulnerability. This sense of vulnerability continues in the rest of the prayer. The returnees have put in a tent peg and staked a claim, but they have not yet raised their tent. This is why these marriages are so dangerous. First Esdras replaces *pĕlêṭâ* and tent peg with "a root and a name" (1 Esd 8:78), things more stable than the Hebrew conveys.

In Isa 22:23, an individual is compared to a tent peg (a "faithful tent peg") upon which all can depend. In Isa 54:2 moving the tent peg signals forthcoming expansion as Jerusalem readies itself to receive its children.

Although several interpreters understand the tent peg to be a metaphor for the temple (e.g., Blenkinsopp 1988, 184), Ezra as likely refers to the community. Only later does the prayer focus on the temple (on the literal meaning of a tent peg in light of ancient Mesopotamian building traditions, especially concerning temples, see Clines 1984, 123, and Fried 2015a, 380).

his consecrated place. The place dedicated to God and to God's service. This differs from Lev 7:6, which refers to a holy place, that is, *māqôm qādôš.* The LXX has "sanctuary." First Esdras 8:78 has "your" in lieu of "his." The NRSV and others have "holy place." There is no need to limit the reference to the temple. The land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular are God's place. Note the dedication ceremonies in Nehemiah 8–10 that culminate in Jerusalem becoming *ʿîr haqqōdeš,* the city of the holy (Neh 11:1, 18).

to illumine our eyes, our God. The Hebrew syntax is awkward, with "our God" oddly out of place, leading to a variety of translations, for example, "our God has restored luster to our eyes" (NJPS) and "in order that he may brighten our eyes" (NRSV). First Esdras 8:79 has "to uncover a light for us in the house of the Lord our God, and to give us food in the time of our servitude."

a little sustenance. Heb. *miḥyâ* and the LXX *zōopoiēsin* imply "making alive." Also possible: "to revive us a little." It is difficult to do justice to the full semantic range in English of the term *miḥyâ,* "sustenance" or "reviving." The word appears six times in the Bible (Gen 45:5; Lev 13:10; Judg 6:4; Ezra 9:8, 9; and 2 Chr 14:12). Although it includes economic livelihood and sustenance, *miḥyâ* also implies signs of life (as in Lev 13:10). Thus, "new life" (NRSV), "quickening" (Koren Jerusalem Bible), and

"rejuvenate" (Fried 2015a, 376). The repetition of the word in Ezra 9:9 evokes in both locations the issues of life and death, expressed throughout the prayer with language such as escaped "survivors." First Esdras 8:79 uses *trophēn,* "food" or "provision."

in our servitude. The noun is confined to EN (here, Ezra 9:9, and in the prayer in Neh 9:17, where it refers to slavery in Egypt). These references to servitude are somewhat startling given Persian support for Judean return and reconstruction (see also in Ezra 9:7). EN's narrative does not often express discontent with Judah's "colonial" status (to use Gottwald's [1985] designation of the era). But the two major prayers in EN (here and Neh 9) make it clear that imperial control, however benevolent, is nonetheless oppressive and (in Neh 9:17) exploitative (see also Notes at Ezra 9:7). On ancient imperial control, see Eisenstadt 1979. For the most detailed account of the Persian Empire, see Briant (2002) and also Jursa (2010) on the Babylonian economy under Persian rule. See Hoglund (1992) for a theory about the nature of Persian control in Judah. Marbury (2020, 231) highlights the way guilt in Ezra 9 justifies subjugation and accommodation to it.

9:9. *For we are slaves, and in our servitude our God has not forsaken us.* Or "we are slaves and in our slavery . . ." "We are" indicates the present situation, not the past. The repetition of the idea of servitude or slavery (here and in v. 8) underscores the plight of the fledgling Judean community and its self-perception as a people at the mercy of a powerful empire. That theme recurs in Neh 9:36. This anguish also magnifies the generosity of God, who hears and responds to the sufferings of slaves. First Esdras omits "slaves." Knoppers (2015, 17) regards the emphasis on royal munificence in Ezra 7:12–26, for example, as an attempt to offset the hardship expressed here.

he bestowed upon us generous love before the kings of Persia. Any benefits from the Persian court have come only because of God's kindness. Although EN typically presents harmony between God's intention and the actions of Persian kings (see Ezra 7:26 on the law), God remains the primary benefactor.

generous love. Heb. *ḥesed.* Typically translated as "loving-kindness" or "steadfast love." But see "generous love" in Notes at Ezra 3:11 and 7:28.

to give us sustenance. See "a little sustenance" in Notes at Ezra 9:8. The repetition highlights the danger to the community's very survival. First Esdras 8:80 has "so they have given us food."

to raise up the house of our God. The syntax and MT punctuation cast the following actions as the purpose of God's gifts to Israel: building God's house is the central task in EN.

to raise up. The word refers to literal and metaphorical elevating and exalting. In this sense it echoes the glorifying of the house of God already mentioned in Ezra 7:27–28. The LXX has "that they," that is, Persian kings, "should raise up." First Esdras 8:81 has "glorified the temple of our Lord and raised Zion from desolation."

our God. The fourfold repetition of "our God" in Ezra 9:8–9 emphasizes God's gracious dealing with Israel and provides a counterpoint to the fourfold repetition of "survivors."

to restore its ruins. As a reference to actual, restored ruins, this expression most naturally designates the temple that had been rebuilt in 516/515 BCE. But the image may also allude to the community since, throughout the prayer, the boundary between land and people is not always discernible.

to give us a fence. Heb. *gādēr* and the LXX *phragmon* designate a fence or low wall (usually of dry-stone construction) that separates dwellings, lands, and vineyards from one another. It is easily breached. It demarcates rather than genuinely protects land.

Ever since van Hoonacker (1890), some scholars had interpreted this term as a reference to Jerusalem's wall and hence as evidence that Nehemiah preceded Ezra (e.g., Batten 1913, 334; see Rowley 1965 and Suiter 1992 for reviews). Although there are several good reasons to postulate that Nehemiah preceded Ezra, the term "fence" does not support that view. The word *gādēr* clearly differs from the ordinary term for city wall, and Nehemiah's wall in particular (*ḥômâ*). The context and the overall message of Ezra's prayer imply a relatively fragile boundary. Like the tent peg, it shows the limits of the new settlement and reflects on the precarious condition and scope of the new community in the land (on *gādēr* as metaphor for vineyard, with allusions to Isa 5 and other texts, see Williamson 1985, 136–37). Fence, *gādēr,* underscores the fact that only a small and poorly protected territory in Judah constitutes the Judean community (Vogt 1966, 42) and that it remains vulnerable to incursions from without. First Esdras 8:81 uses *stereōma,* a "stronghold," thereby imbuing the image with power.

9:10. *And now, what can we say, our God, after this? For we have forsaken your commandments.* Having delineated God's generosity, Ezra turns to define the transgression.

commandments. Identifying which commandments are in view remains a challenge with no certain solutions (see Notes at Ezra 9:11–12 and Comments [9:1–15]).

9:11. *that you commanded by the hand of your servants the prophets, saying: 'The land that you are coming to inherit is a land of blood pollution/menstruation with the blood pollution/menstruation of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that filled her from mouth to mouth with their impurity.* After contextualizing the gravity of the problem, Ezra turns to the specific violations. The danger, Ezra claims, is impurity or pollution. The reference to "saying" indicates a quotation. Given EN's narrative and Ezra 7:10, the source would appear to be God's *torah.* But Ezra does not say so. The language echoes messages found in Leviticus 18, Deut 7:1–6, and Ezek 36:17 (see below).

Yet, while Ezra's prayer presents the current situation as a clear violation of preexisting prohibitions, it does not mention the *torah.* In fact, it combines in a new way a number of teachings found in the Pentateuch in order to condemn the present marriages. One may call it inner biblical exegesis (Fishbane 1988, 114–23) or Baumann's (1999) "essentializing." As Baumann puts it, a preacher presents a new idea or cluster of ideas as something that was always true for the community and an incontrovertible part of the tradition ("essentializing") while in fact putting it into a new or modified use ("processual") in order to transform a community.

To what commandments does Ezra refer? Answering this question is difficult, given uncertainty about the extent of the Pentateuch and other writings in the Persian period. Theories abound but with very little consensus (see Gertz, Levinson, Rom-Shiloni, and Schmid 2016). This makes every answer tentative (see below).

that you commanded by the hand of your servants the prophets, saying. Which prophets are meant? Moses in Lev 18:24–30 refers to the polluted land; Deut 7:1–6 prohibits marriage with daughters of the land. Ezekiel (e.g., 36:17) mentions menstruation in speaking about the polluted land. None of these, however, precisely parallels what Ezra says in Ezra 9:11–12. Moses in Deuteronomy warns about apostasy (Deut 7:1–6), not

pollution. Pollution in Leviticus 18 results from incest, and in Ezekiel, from Israel's own idolatry, not from foreigners or intermarriage.

by the hand . . . saying. References to "hand" as authority are common in postexilic texts (see also Ezra 7:6). The expression "saying" in the Bible functions typically as a formulaic term introducing direct quotations (e.g., Deut 1:28). Nowhere in the Bible, however, do we find the precise statements that Ezra attributes to the prophets. What follows closely echoes several Pentateuchal teachings combined with Ezekiel. One would expect Ezra to refer to the *torah,* or to say "as it is written"; but surprisingly, this is not the case. Japhet (1985, 108) concludes that "the logic of the story lies in its being a new situation which needed new solutions. Indeed, Ezra does not appear to consult any written book when he formulates his response."

Silence about "*torah*" or "as it is written" here can counter the hypothesis that Nehemiah 8 originally preceded Ezra 9: Ezra does not mention the *torah* because he has not as yet presented it to the community. EN's narrative claims that he does so thirteen years later (earlier in 1 Esd 9:37). EN perhaps seeks to convey that it took Ezra the scribe and priest time to copy, collate, or edit a book of *torah* and possibly also train companions able to interpret it (as Neh 8:1–9 demonstrates). In the present, canonical sequence, Ezra's prayer is his initial attempt to communicate God's teaching to the community. This narrative sequence describes what EN communicates. It does not answer the historical questions.

The land that you are coming to inherit is a land of blood pollution/menstruation with the blood pollution/menstruation of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations. The LXX has "a land subject to disturbance with the removal of the people of the nations for their abominations." The basic message is that marriages with women from the peoples of the lands are polluting and forbidden. Ezra's rationale incorporates several disconnected teachings that can be found in biblical texts (esp. Lev 18:3, 27–30; Deut 7:1–9, esp. 1–4; 23:4–7; Ezek 36:17). The language of defiling the land reflects Leviticus 18, where pollution results from sexual offenses. In Ezek 36:17 *niddâ,* "blood pollution," as metaphor for abominations refers to defilement from Israel's own idolatrous actions, not those of the early inhabitants.

In Ezra's synthesis, a dismal fate awaits all who follow those earlier inhabitants (both Canaanites and Israelites). In Leviticus 18, defiling offenses include "and you shall not approach a woman in the *niddâ* of her impurity to uncover her nakedness" (Lev 18:19), as well as incest. Offenders in Leviticus 18 must be cut off from the community in order that the land not vomit out the nation as it did the former Canaanite nations (Lev 18:28–29; also Lev 20:22).

Since Ezra's seeming quotation in Ezra 9:11–12 cannot be found in the prophets or in precisely this manner, three possibilities need to be considered. First, it may be an imprecise citation. Second, it may be a synthesis of several sources, possibly with the reference to "the prophets" as a general term that includes Moses (Grabbe 1998, 145). Third, EN may use Ezra to model and legitimize the application of tradition to changed circumstances. If so, Ezra demonstrates how to combine several different texts and ideas. The entire episode may be elaborated in detail specifically in order to highlight not only *that* ancient commandments must be applied to contemporary situations, but *how* to develop hermeneutical and societal processes for doing so. All these explana-

tions, however, remain somewhat hypothetical given the uncertainty about the nature and extent of a written *torah* at the time of EN's composition.

you. The plural "you" now reframes the message to include Ezra's contemporaries.

blood pollution/menstruation. Heb. *niddâ.* The LXX has *metakinoumenē,* "to move away," which relates to the Heb. *n.d.d.,* "to wander," not its usual word for menstruation (*aphedros,* as in Lev 15:20). First Esdras 8:83 has *molysmos,* "pollution."

The Hebrew, *niddâ,* primarily refers to impurity related to a woman who discharges blood, either in connection with childbirth (Lev 12) or during menstruation (Lev 15:19–30). But according to Lev 20:21, "If a man takes his brother's wife, it [or she] is *niddâ;* he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."

Translations of *niddâ* are inconsistent. The NRSV and NJPS translate it as "discharges blood" in Lev 15:19 and "impurity" in Lev 15:20. Elsewhere, translators use "menstruation" (e.g., NJPS and NRSV in Lev 12:2 and 5). The NJPS has "uncleanness" in Lev 18:19, and the NRSV, "menstrual uncleanness." The NJPS translates the Hebrew *kĕṭum'at hanniddâ* in Ezek 37:17 as "the uncleanness of a menstruant woman." However, the NJPS translates Ezra 9:11 as "a land unclean through the uncleanness of the peoples," and the NRSV has "unclean with the pollutions of the peoples."

Importantly, Lev 15:19–30 prescribes rituals for both men and women who have contact with menstruation, to restore them to the purity required for contact and worship. By contrast, abominations of the nations in Lev 18:24–30 render the land impure (*ṭāmē',* not *niddâ*) with the result that the land will vomit out its inhabitants. But the abominations in Lev 18:6–23 and 20:21 pertain mostly to issues of incest (in Lev 18:19, *niddâ* refers to a menstruating woman, who is therefore off-limits).

Ezra's prayer invokes messages such as those in Leviticus and Ezekiel but significantly redefines the meaning of the communal sin. The prayer creates a web of metaphorical connection between land and women that thereby underscores the sexual overtones of the violation. "Land" is grammatically feminine in Hebrew. The prayer combines "woman" and "land" so that women and their sexuality endanger the land. A comparable conjunction appears also in Ezekiel: "when the house of Israel lived on their own soil, they defiled [from *ṭum'a,* "impurity"] it with their ways and their deeds; their conduct in my sight was like the uncleanness [from *ṭum'a,* "impurity"] of a woman in her menstrual period [*niddâ*]" (Ezek 36:17). For Ezekiel, contemporary Israel, not the early inhabitants of the land, caused pollution. Ezra makes similar claims; in my view his accusation includes those in the land who (as in Ezekiel) call themselves "Israel."

Ezekiel 36:17 likens Israel to a *niddâ* via a simile (it is *like* that woman); Ezra 9:11 drops the simile. Direct equation, doubly emphasized (note the repetition of *niddâ*), plays on sexual fears and taboos. The leap from metaphor to direct equation connects women more directly with defiling the land (for more on the *niddâ,* see Adler 1993 and Fonrobert 2000). The contrast between "seed" (male, dedicated to the holy) and *niddâ* (female, and polluting) intensifies the negative association of women and pollution (Washington 2003).

The relatively rare use of the term *niddâ* as metaphor appears also in 4Q381, fragment 46. Note also the Greek additions to Esther (Esth 14:16), where Esther uses the Greek equivalent of *niddâ* to express her repulsion at the matrimonial bed.

with the blood pollution/menstruation of the peoples of the lands. The repetition of *niddâ,* "blood pollution," underscores the ritual defilement but in addition emphasizes women by the distinct association of *niddâ* with women. In Ezra's prayer, current inhabitants in the land resemble the earlier Canaanites, and laws pertaining to the Canaanites of old apply to the present as well. Israel after exile is akin to Israel entering the promised land. The historical reality that the land in the postexilic time contained Judeans and Israelites who had not been exiled is ignored. Most likely (as in Ezekiel), some such population is also regarded as polluting.

peoples of the lands. See Notes at Ezra 9:1–2. Milgrom (1991, 360) suggests that here Ezra "simply has applied Deuteronomy's *ḥērem* against the seven local peoples (Deut 7:1–4) against their latter-day progeny." But Ezra's reason is not simple or direct. The targeted local population in Ezra's prayer includes Judeans and Israelites currently in the promised land (see Comments [9:1–15]).

from mouth to mouth with their impurity. Most English translations of this unusual phrase rightly render it as an idiom, "from end to end" (e.g., the NRSV; similarly, the NJPS). The only other reference to "mouth to mouth" (Num 12:8) describes the unique relation between God and Moses. Intense intimacy may be the point here as well. A similar expression (with the preposition *lĕ* instead of *ʾel,* as here) in 2 Kgs 10:21 and 21:16 refers to religious violations (Baal worship in Ahab's time and bloodshed by Manasseh).

with their impurity. The ordinary term for cultic impurity or pollution is used, without distinct female associations.

9:12. *And now, your daughters do not give to their sons, and their daughters do not take up for your sons, and you shall not seek out their peace and their well-being ever, in order that you will be strengthened and eat the good of the land, and bequeath [it] to your sons forever.* Ezra's prayer here constitutes a virtual quotation of Deut 7:3, but the slight differences highlight EN's distinctive perspective. While the language of "peoples of the lands" in Ezra 9:1–2 implies foreigners anywhere, Ezra's prayer here, like the accusation in 9:1–2, applies to those living in the land promised to Israel. This may include both Judah and Samaria, since there is no reason to suppose that EN restricts its notion of the land to the Persian province of Judah.

And now. This phrase bridges, even obliterates, the time difference between the original prohibition to Israel in the wilderness and the contemporary situation of the *gôlâ* community in Judah. "Now" thereby means the "now" both of the "back then" and of the present time.

your daughters do not give to their sons, and their daughters do not take up for your sons. Note the close parallel with "your daughter do not give to his son, and his daughter do not take for your son" (Deut 7:3). Ezra, however, uses a different verb for marriage with "their daughters" (see below and at Ezra 9:2). Ezra's use of the plural (in contrast to Deut 7:3) underscores the collective nature and implications of the problem.

your daughters do not give. The emphasis falls on daughters. In preexilic biblical texts, marriage is typically understood as the giving and taking of daughters, as in other ANE texts (see the Elephantine documents and also Roth 1989). EN does not describe marriages of Judean daughters in Ezra 9–10. But Neh 6:18 mentions the marriage of the daughter of a well-positioned Judean to the son of Tobiah, whom Nehemiah labels an "Ammonite servant" (see Notes at 9:2 for further discussion).

their daughters do not take up for your sons. While in close parallel with Deut 7:3, the verb for marriage here is *tiśʾû,* from *n.ś.ʾ.,* "to lift, carry, support," instead of Deuteronomy's more common *l.q.ḥ.,* "to take." The LXX uses *labete,* "take." Possibly Ezra is using what had become a late term for marriage; but perhaps, given the common semantic range of the verb as "to lift up," he deliberately underscores that these women "marry up" when they marry a Judean (see further "taken up" in Notes at Ezra 9:2, and Comments [9:1–15]).

you shall not seek out their peace and their well-being ever. Deuteronomy 7:3, which so closely resembles the first part of Ezra 9:11, continues with the demand that the peoples listed (including most of those mentioned in Ezra 9:1) be destroyed. Ezra 9:11 instead continues with a parallel to Deut 23:7, requiring exclusion, not destruction. Ezra's interpretation undergirds the call to separation (eliminating destruction or expulsion from the land).

ever. The expression is repeated twice, first to underscore the permanence of the prohibition and second ("forever" below) to underscore the permanence of the inheritance when the nation follows God's commandment. God's commandment, according to Ezra's formulation, was not historically contingent, relevant only to the time of the early entry into the land. Rather, it applies equally to the postexilic community. Rabbinic sources differentiate between rules that apply to the time of Joshua and those that apply later. Consequently, they set aside permanent exclusion that prevents conversion. A midrash regards the exclusion of Ammonites and Moabites as applicable only to males, hence Ruth the Moabite is welcomed (see *Ruth Rabbah* 2.9; Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky 2012, xlii–xlviii; and "the Ammonites, the Moabites" in Notes at Ezra 9:1).

in order that you will be strengthened and eat the good of the land, and bequeath [it] to your sons forever. The promise of inheriting the land and its goodness most explicitly emerges here, as the climax. Land and land inheritance stand as the final goal of the commandments. Deuteronomy repeatedly emphasizes loss of land (e.g., Deut 11:8–9), which features prominently in Ezra's prayer. The concern is natural in light of the prior history. Yet the preoccupation with holding land may have more specific challenges in view: land rights as an issue in the controversy over marriage. As sources from antiquity show, formal marriages often were contracted primarily for the purpose of progeny and transmission of property. A number of scholars argue that land distribution between members of the Judean community was an important postexilic concern (Hoglund 1992, 207–40; Weinberg 1992b; Eskenazi 2006). If so, opposition to wives from the peoples of the lands is not only religious but also economic because marriage could result in loss of communal land through legal patterns of property transfer (Num 27, 36; Eskenazi 1992a; Marbury 2020). Ben Zvi (1995, 104–13), however, discounts a concern over land rights, noting that the land was sparsely populated.

Ezra's prayer locates the danger in divine retribution rather than contemporary politics or economics. Land security and proper marriage go together. To violate the one is to forfeit the other. Securing the land forever means shunning the "abominations" of peoples of the lands and their women.

the good of the land. In Deuteronomy, the land encompassed both the territory of Israel (Samaria in the postexilic era) and Judah. There is no reason to conclude that Ezra

or EN restricts the meaning to Persian-period Judah, especially since Neh 9:8 links to the promise to Abraham.

forever. The Hebrew for "forever" is the same as "ever" (earlier in this verse). Its repetition underscores the two opposing realities. The community must choose between the peoples of the lands and possessing Israel's inheritance.

9:13. *And after all that has come upon us through our evil deeds and our great guilt.* Ezra concludes his prayer by moving from citing tradition to explicit application to the current crisis, underscoring God's leniency.

guilt. The noun appears consistently in the singular in EN, although the plural appears elsewhere (e.g., Ps 69:6). In EN it emphasizes that there had been one consistent sin throughout Israel's history and that the transgression may have been inadvertent since "guilt" technically refers to inadvertent sin (see further "guilt" in Notes at Ezra 9:6).

for you, our God, had held back some of our iniquities. God graciously reckoned less than the people's actual guilt. Translations smooth out the awkward Hebrew syntax in various ways. The LXX has "none there is like our God to lighten our lawlessness"; the NRSV, "you . . . have punished us less than our iniquities deserve"; the NJPS, "You, our God, have been forbearing, [punishing us] less than our iniquity [deserves]"; 1 Esd 8:86, "lifted the burden of our sins."

held back. The LXX has "lighten."

and gave us survivors such as these. The survivors are Ezra's community. The noun (*pĕlêṭâ*) appears three times in Ezra 9:13–15 (and with Ezra 9:8, four times in the prayer). The LXX has "salvation," here as in 9:8 (see further "survivors" in Notes at Ezra 9:8).

these. Lit. "this," referring to *pĕlêṭâ,* a singular noun for a collective.

9:14. *shall we return to thwart your commandments and to wed these peoples of abominations? Will you not rage against us and bring complete destruction, with no remnant and survivors?* The "we" refers to the actual hearers of Ezra's public confession. Ezra justifies utter destruction by God as a response to the magnitude of transgressions. He claims that marriage is of national significance, not just a private, family matter. Apparently, this perspective was not shared by all Judeans.

shall we return? The verb has a double meaning, "to return to a place" and "to repeat an action." Ezra is asking rhetorically: Will we return to the land only to return to our sins?

thwart. "To cancel" or "to break" a rule. It is covenant language in Ezekiel and Leviticus (e.g., Lev 26:15) but used to frustrate plans in Ezra 4:5 and Neh 4:9.

to wed. Heb. *lĕhiṯṯattēn,* from *ḥ.t.n.* Ezra uses matrimonial language that Deut 7:3 uses, meaning also "to become in-laws" and "to form a marriage alliance" (so BDB 368). It emphasizes a network of legal relations extending beyond the married couple to their families. Saul uses this term to invite David to become the king's son-in-law (1 Sam 18:23). It thus expresses a relationship between males now linked through a woman. This term alludes to cross-influence (Southwood 2012, 169–72), thereby stressing the improper, broader alliances in which the men are implicated. Other terms for marriage, "take," "give," "take up," or "elevate," carry different connotations. First Esdras 8:87 uses "mixing." Most translators render the verb as "intermarry" (NJPS; NRSV; Williamson 1985, 126; Blenkinsopp 1988, 181), but the KJV, "join in affinity with," is better.

these peoples of abominations. Ezra does not go so far as to say "abominable peoples," categorizing them, rather, as peoples dedicated to abominations. The LXX omits "abominations."

bring complete destruction. Heb. *ʿad kallēh,* lit. "until complete." On its own, *k.l.h.* can mean completion in a positive sense, as in Gen 2:1. But whenever these two words appear together, the meaning is "utter destruction" or "extermination" (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 13:17).

with no remnant and survivors. The final rhetorical question sums up the precarious position of those who survived as *pĕlêṭâ* and now seek to rebuild their lives in Judah.

remnant. A great deal has been written about the notion of "remnant" in the postexilic period (Hausmann 1987; Japhet 2006; Rom-Shiloni 2013). Jeremiah uses the term for exiles who will be restored (Jer 23:3), for those who remained in the land, whom he likens to bad figs destined for destruction (Jer 24:8), and for those in Egypt. In Haggai, where it appears three times (Hag 1:12, 14; 2:2), "remnant" identifies those who remained in the land (Japhet 2006, 435–36). For Zechariah, where it also is used three times (Zech 8:6, 11, and 12, always as "the remnant of the people"), it includes all who survived destruction and live in the land (Japhet 2006, 436–37). In Ezra 9–10, it means Ezra's community. Japhet (ibid., 441) considers it an exclusive reference to the returning exiles. But Neh 7:71 [ET 72], which does not seem to have similar theological connotations, leaves open the possibility that in EN the term is more general than technical.

survivors. Heb. *pĕlêṭâ.* The LXX has *diasōzomenon,* "saved," here and in v. 15 (see "survivors" in Notes at Ezra 9:8). First Esdras 8:88 refers to the extinction of "root and seed and our name."

9:15. *YHWH, God of Israel, you are righteous, for we remain survivors as of this day.* Ezra's prayer concludes by affirming God's justice and the people's collective guilt. Missing is the expected petition. That is left to the witnessing community. God is now "our God," not "my God" (Ezra 9:6), and specifically "God of Israel" (see Stahl 2020 for the polemical implications of this term and its use in affirming identity and legitimacy).

you are righteous. This phrase "constitutes the highest form of worship: . . . God is thus praised solely for who he is, and not merely for what the worshiper hopes to gain" (Williamson 1985, 138). The Hebrew term carries forensic overtones. See Neh 9:8.

as of this day. The concluding reference recalls "this day" (Ezra 9:7) as a time of captivity and shame as well as guilt. See also the prayer in Neh 9:10 and 32. Emphasis on "today" as a time for decisive choice is especially prominent in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deut 29:9; see further Notes at Ezra 9:7).

here we are before you in our guilt, for there is no standing before you on account of this. The prayer ends with no request or repentance. Ezra's prayer is often called a confession (based on Ezra 10:1). Leviticus 5:5 specifies confession as one of the procedures for rectifying certain contaminating actions and guilt. But Ezra does not ask for mercy or forgiveness. His prayer is not supplication. In this respect it differs sharply from the other major confessions recorded in the Bible (e.g., Dan 9:4–19).

The prayer, unlike Neh 9:32 and other confessions, makes no explicit request, nor does it promise repentance. Rather, Ezra 9 sets in motion the process of communal repentance and renewal. By raising questions and offering no solutions, Ezra's prayer implicitly yet effectively challenges his audience to choose what they will do (compare

this strategy with Elijah at Carmel in 1 Kgs 18:21, or Joshua at Shechem in Josh 24:15). The community meets the challenge in Ezra 10.

on account of this. The feminine form of "this" directly refers to guilt (feminine noun) but also to God's grace, another feminine noun (Ezra 9:8).

Comments (9:1–15)

Stage Two of rebuilding God's house (Ezra 7–10) focuses on building the community. It defines (or redefines?) the community's identity. As in Stages One (Ezra 3–6) and Three (Neh 1–7), tension with outsiders emerges after initial successes. This tension takes the form of marriages with "the peoples of the lands," unions that Ezra considers utterly destructive to Israel's survival. Appropriate marriage thus becomes a core criterion for membership and a decisive expression of dedication to God. Traditions about "holy matrimony" have roots in this type of reasoning.

No external evidence verifies the historicity of the depicted events. Most scholars, however, treat the conflict in Ezra 9 (or 9–10) as an actual, historical controversy (though not necessarily exact in detail) and offer numerous plausible interpretations (for reviews of the issues and bibliography, see Johnson 2011, 79–108; Southwood 2012; Yoo 2017, 177–201).

Ezra 9–10 addresses what today we call "identity politics." Historical and sociological studies confirm that concerns about communal or national identity come to the fore when traditions are interrupted or cease to function. War and deportation, followed by new sociopolitical structures and mobility under Persian rule, disrupted Judean forms of cohesion. EN takes steps to shape Israel's identity in these new circumstances (for some of the complexities of life under colonial or imperial rule, see Brett 2008, 112–31, esp. 129–31).

In concentrating on marriage, Ezra 9 and 10 address questions that prove perennial in Jewish history: (1) Who is a Jew ("Israel" in EN)? (2) Who decides this (and on what basis)? (3) What steps can best secure the survival of a small Jewish ("Judean" in EN) community in multicultural, multireligious, multinational settings, especially under foreign rule?

Ezra 9–10 exemplifies one biblical response, often termed "exclusive" (but note the more useful term, "exclusive inclusivity," in Rom-Shiloni 2013). Other postexilic biblical texts display different positions, typically labeled inclusive (Isa 56:1–8, Ruth, Chronicles, and also the Holiness School, according to Brett 2016, 91–109).

As Southwood's (2012) study of EN illustrates, terms for analyzing identity are as slippery as the reality of identity itself. The following review of key questions can help clarify EN's position on the subject and some major assessments of it (see also Eskenazi forthcoming[a]).

What does EN claim about the objectionable marriages and why does it oppose them?

According to Ezra 9, marriage with certain women is polluting because of their abominations; therefore, it is necessary to separate from them (Ezra 9:1–2, 11–12). Ezra 9 (unlike Ezra 10) never labels the forbidden women "foreign." Deuteronomy and Ezekiel, which mention "abomination" most frequently, connect it to forms of idolatry. Deuteronomy relates abomination to foreign practices (see, e.g., Deut 18:12); Ezekiel ascribes

it instead to Israel's own defiling practices (see "in their abominations" in NOTES at Ezra 9:1).

Scholars such as Klawans, Hayes, Olyan, Milgrom, and Saysell seek to identify what priestly categories account in EN for Israel's need to separate from these allegedly impure people. Klawans (2000, 26–31) focuses on "ritual" purity and "moral" purity, acknowledging that the language is somewhat anachronistic. "Ritual" impurity can be removed through acts of purification. "Moral" impurity can be atoned for only with confession and other rites; unlike "ritual" impurity, it is not contagious, but only the transgressor can remove it. According to Klawans the implicit charge in Ezra 9 is "moral" impurity (ibid., 26–46). Hayes (2002, 6–7) follows Klawans but considers EN to reenvision "moral" impurity. She supposes that impermeable boundaries in EN result from the pollution of the lineage, a type of defilement that is EN's innovation. Olyan (2004, 4–6) also suggests that EN marshals forms of impurity "to craft a new, unprecedented ideology of alien pollution." But in contrast to Klawans and Hayes, Olyan claims that Ezra 9 draws upon both the ritual and the moral purity traditions, whereas they do not acknowledge ritual impurity as a concern.

Milgrom (1976b, 72; 2000, 1584–86) identifies the problem in Ezra 9 as desecration of the *sancta:* defilement contaminates the inherent sanctity of the men. Milgrom considers Ezra's claim a legal midrash based on Deut 7:6, a text in which holiness constitutes Israel's actual status, in contrast to the Priestly source where Israel's holiness is but a desideratum (see also Saysell 2012, 80–95).

Ezra 9 indeed posits desecration of the *sancta* as the danger, but it does not claim inherent holiness, as Milgrom supposes. Rather, what Brett (2008, 116) writes about Lev 18:26 applies as well to Ezra 9: it is "the abominations that are at issue, the sinful actions, not the ethnicity of the persons committing them." Ezra 9 does not mention ethnicity because, most likely, the "peoples of the lands" (as most scholars concur) include Judeans and Israelites, who are ethnically the same. Defilement results specifically from marriage with them because marriage entails intimate physical contact with spouses whose practices ("abominations" according to Ezra 9:1–2) pollute them. This is the explicit charge. Other contacts with peoples of the lands do not necessarily entail pollution.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE CONSECRATED SEED"?

The expression *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* is unique in the Bible to Ezra 9:2 and resembles MT *zeraʿ qōdeš* in Isa 6:13 (which does not appear in LXX Isa 6:13; but see *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* in the Isaiah Scroll IQIs[a] and Qumran's 4QMMT B75 and B81).

Most scholars translate and interpret *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* as if it were *hazzeraʿ haqqādôš,* "the holy seed." Discussions by Klawans, Hayes, Harrington, and Saysell, among others, depend on translating "the holy seed." However, the two terms—*qōdeš* (in Ezra 9:2) and *qādôš*—differ in crucial ways. The adverb *qādôš* imputes holiness to the object it describes; this would mean that the seed itself is holy. But Ezra 9 makes no such claim. The noun *qōdeš* with the definite article (Ezra 9:2) communicates, instead, that the seed is dedicated to the holy (thus "consecrated"). It does not impute intrinsic holiness. The "seed" belongs to the holy because it was dedicated (or dedicated itself) to God and has a sacred purpose. It is not itself holy. Many things and people can be dedicated to the holy, the *qōdeš,* without in any way being holy themselves (animals and people in

Lev 27:9–33; vessels in Ezra 8:28; see also Notes at Ezra 9:2). When intended for a holy purpose, the dedicated ones risk defilement by direct physical contact with pollution (hence the mandated separation). *Zeraʿ haqqōdeš* differs also from terms that, like *zeraʿ* Israel (Neh 9:2), indicate where the seed comes from. The phrase *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* describes (as *qōdeš* does in Lev 27:9–33) what the seed is destined for.

Ignoring the difference between *qōdeš* and *qādôš* has led to manifold (and in my view misleading) interpretations. Saysell (2012, 82) thus concludes that Ezra 9:1–2 "carries with it the sense of holiness that is conferred by physical descent." Harrington (2008, 101–2) regards holiness as biologically transmitted (see also Becking 2018; Southwood 2012, 125–28). However, while the seed in Ezra 9 is biological, its status as *qōdeš* is not. For Ezra 9, Judean genealogy is likely a prerequisite for membership but does not suffice. Devotion to the holy is an additional requirement for inclusion as Israel. Those so committed are *zeraʿ haqqōdeš.*

Ezra 9 differs from Deuteronomy, in which Israel is "a holy people," *ʿam qādôš,* not *qōdeš* (Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19, 28:9). As Milgrom (1991, 359) concludes, "the D source [the Deuteronomist] alone declares that the people as a whole bear the status of a sanctum." In the Priestly source, sanctity belongs only to priests (e.g., Lev 21:6–7) and Nazirites (Num 6:5). "The rest of Israel is not holy inherently. . . . Indeed, the doctrine that holiness *inheres in Israel constitutes in P [the Priestly source] the infamous heresy of Korah* (Num 16:3)" (ibid., emphasis original).

Ezra 9 reflects the Priestly source as Milgrom depicts it, not Deuteronomy. It does not grant sanctity to the genealogy itself. Those who have dedicated themselves acquire status as *qōdeš.* They lose it (are defiled) when violating God's demands. Intimate contact with people dedicated to abominations means contact with impurities generated by abominable practices, thereby desecrating what belongs to God.

As Koltun-Fromm (2010, 32) notes, all the biblical authors reserve *q.d.š.* "to designate things, people, space, and time that belong exclusively to God." The *torah* traditions reflect conflicting understandings regarding the mechanisms of holiness, but also some consistent themes. "While only God is intrinsically holy, other things can be consecrated to God through ritual means and can thus be made holy" (ibid., 33). However, when holiness is bestowed (as in Deut 7:6), it is God who does it, and the term is *qādôš,* not *qōdeš.*

The connection of Israel with the holy appears in key moments in Israel's tradition, most famously at Sinai (Exod 19:6) where *qādôš* is used for the people (see also Deut 7:6). The prophets and Psalms use both *qādôš* and *qōdeš* for Israel. But when *qōdeš* is used, it describes something as specifically designated for God or the sanctuary. Thus, *ʾanšê qōdeš* in Exod 22:30 [ET 31] means a "people consecrated" (NRSV), not "a holy people." In Jer 2:3, Israel as *qōdeš* belongs exclusively to God, which is why no one may touch or devour Israel.

The specific meaning of *zeraʿ haqqōdeš* in EN is unambiguously illuminated by Ezra's use of *qōdeš* in Ezra 8:28. Ezra here declares the vessels *qōdeš* because they have been dedicated to God's temple. As gifts from the king and others, the vessels do not possess intrinsic holiness; but when designated for the temple, they acquire a new status. Attention to this transformation in status is crucial for understanding the use of *qōdeš* in EN. Nehemiah 11:1 and 18 further underscore the attributive (not intrinsic)

sense in EN: Jerusalem becomes the city of the *qōdeš* only after the community has dedicated itself to God, the *torah,* and the temple (Neh 8–10).

Dedication to God for special tasks typically entails separation. Ezra therefore separates some priests and Levites when he appoints them for a special task and designates them as *qōdeš* (Ezra 8:24–28). Ezra 9 applies such requirement to all who count in EN as "Israel."

The term "seed," *zeraʿ,* usually applies to the propagative feature of living beings and plants. When ascribed to humans in the Bible, it typically refers to progeny and lineage, as in the patriarchal and matriarchal blessings (see "seed" in Notes at Ezra 9:2). The seed in Ezra 9:2 invokes a genealogical or biological connection with ancestors and progeny. It is not itself holy. But since Israel was called to dedicate itself to God, those who join themselves to practitioners of abominations violate the relationship with God for which they were intended. Yet (as I suggest above) the transgression implies no "genetic modification."

A different interpretation is held by Hayes (2002), Saysell (2012), Johnson (2011), Harrington (2008), Frevel (2011), and Becking (2018) (to mention a few). Hayes (2002, 10) argues that "Ezra is the first to define Jewish identity in almost exclusively genealogical terms." Frevel (2011, 9) likewise finds "claims of (genealogical) purity." For Harrington (2008, 99–104), holiness is biological, and intermarriage risks impairing it: moral, genealogical, and ritual purity are integrated in Ezra 9–10 (she claims), which is why impurity cannot be overcome by any other means except separation.

Saysell (2012, 81–121) concludes from her meticulous study of Ezra 9–10 that "Holiness is conferred by physical descent as in the case of the priests" (82). She suggests an inherent quality in the women that is deemed unacceptable: "foreign women in Ezra 9-10 are 'morally impure' and their effect is profanation . . . affecting irrevocably the children of such mixed marriages" (121). She bases her conclusion on Israel's inherent holiness. But as I argue above, the message in Ezra 9–10 is not genetically inflected.

Brett's (2016, 99) assessment of the situation is particularly valuable: "In Ezra-Nehemiah the national imaginary was interpreted not as a legal obligation to destroy Canaanites but as a call for the Israelites to maintain a clear separateness from other groups or *gôyîm.* In this tradition, the nation was reborn with a vocation of holiness." For Brett, this vocation was "construed in ethnic terms" (ibid.). I suggest that the vocation in Ezra 9 redefines boundaries, and thereby ethnicity. As a result, some Judeans and Israelites are classified as belonging to the objectionable "peoples of the lands."

Hayes's (2002, 10) comment that "Ezra is the first to define Jewish identity in almost exclusively genealogical terms" is inaccurate on two counts. First, membership based "almost exclusively on genealogical terms" is hardly new; it is the most common criterion in the Bible. Second, in Ezra 9, genealogy no longer suffices. While the genealogical link is presumed, certain actions determine membership, including what Brett calls "vocation." This vocation, in EN, will include commitment to the *torah* (Neh 8–10).

Ironically, adding vocation as a criterion for membership lays a foundation for inclusion in which certain commitments override genealogy (see the book of Ruth). In EN, however, the definition of Israel as belonging to the *qōdeš* provides a basis for excluding Judeans and Israelites who do not subscribe to EN's agenda. Ezra 10 categorizes

them as "foreign" (shared genealogy notwithstanding) along with those who genealogically belong to other nations. With this categorization, Ezra 9–10 narrows the definition of Israel in one sense and, by including the diaspora, expands it in another.

what is meant by "abominations"?

"Abomination" in the Bible primarily refers to idolatry—a violation that can take various forms (see "in their abominations" in Notes at Ezra 9:1). In EN it probably includes worship at other temples, especially, perhaps the one in Samaria. But more may be implied. Diverse modes of worship, including household traditions apart from temple traditions, existed in preexilic Judah, especially in rural areas. We can suppose that household and local forms of cultic worship not only persisted, but possibly increased after the temple's demise in 587/586 BCE. Archaeological, biblical, and historical sources give some information about these traditions. Jeremiah, for example, mentions (and opposes) households' worship of the "queen of heaven" in Jerusalem and Egypt (Jer 7:17–18, 44:15–19). Evidence points to women's active roles in household religions. In excavated homes, incense burners and altars, along with other cultic accoutrements, are often found in or near areas that exhibit traditional women's occupations such as weaving and cooking (see E. Stern 2001, 510–13; Ackerman 2008; Balcells Gallarreta 2017; C. Meyers 2018, and also C. Meyers 2005 and Willett 2003 on households and holiness). Worshippers using such sites and cultic objects likely did not consider them to be in conflict with the worship of YHWH; the Bible does.

S. J. D. Cohen's (1999, 266) observation that "the cult as well as everything else of importance, was the domain of the men" fits EN's centralization of the cult with its professional staff. Given women's roles in household and family religious practices, one can expect some resistance by women to EN's reforms. Ezra 9 may have such women in view. Ezra's language of *niddâ* in Ezra 9:11–12, a term distinctly related to women, "feminizes" the conflict. It may reflect a reaction to women who challenged EN's focus on the temple, with its exclusively male professionals. Noadiah the prophetess, the only clearly named woman in EN, and an opponent of Nehemiah (Neh 6:14), may represent such opposition. The striking inclusion of women in certain key scenes in EN (Ezra 10:1; Neh 8:2–3; 10:29; 12:43) may aim to demonstrate support by women for EN's program in order to counter opposition by other women.

who are the objectionable "peoples of the lands"?

Ezra in Ezra 9 objects to marriages with the "peoples of the lands." The language implies people belonging to different lands. It used to be generally supposed, therefore, that the conflict was with only foreigners, often reading Ezra 9:1–2 as a direct reference to, for example, Canaanites and Hittites (e.g., NRSV; Myers 1965a, 73). But Ezra 9:1–2 likens the present peoples to the earlier inhabitants of Canaan by means of a simile, thereby differentiating the two groups. Ezra 9:11–12 objects to those living in the land in Ezra's time, applying to them laws that pertain to the time of Moses (in Deuteronomy) and Joshua.

But Ezra 9 is silent about the actual nationality or ethnicity of the women or the peoples of the lands. It objects to their practices, equating these "abominations" with those of the early inhabitants of Canaan (Ezra 9:1). Several details indicate that Ezra 9 includes Judeans and Israelites among these forbidden marriage partners. First, Ezra 9

does not call these people foreign (in contrast to Ezra 10). Unlike Neh 13:23–27, Ezra 9 does not claim that these were Ashdodite, Ammonite, or Moabite women—categories that would have been relevant if the people were truly foreign. Second, while Judah included an ethnically diverse population, the majority of people, especially the rural majority, were Judean and, in Samaria, Israelite (frequent contact with genuine foreigners was likely limited). Third, tension between exiles and Judeans who remained in the land already appears in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 24, Ezek 33:23–29; see Notes at Ezra 9:1); it can be presumed to have continued, even intensified, during the postexilic period. Fourth, Ezra 9 does not resort to familiar ethnic markers such as circumcision (neither does the rest of EN) when disparaging the peoples of the lands. The likely explanation for this is that genealogy or circumcision did not always differentiate the newcomers from the objectionable peoples in the land; their actions did. Fifth, there is no sign that Ezra 9–10 restricts the "land" to mean Judah alone. The inherited "land" (9:11) in the Pentateuch and Joshua typically refers to more than the territory of the Persian-period province of Judah. It includes Samaria, the former kingdom of Israel. In Neh 9:8, it is the land promised to Abraham, originally belonging to nations listed in Ezra 9:1.

Yet, as numerous scholars note, Ezra 9 does not acknowledge the objectionable people as Judeans or Israelites. As Grabbe (1998, 138) notes, "The text simply refuses to admit that there were Jewish inhabitants of the land after the deportations under Nebuchadnezzar. . . . One can only conclude that many, if not all these 'people of the land' were the Jewish descendants of those who were not exiled."

EN's treatment of Samaria is peculiar. One would not know from EN what extrabiblical sources document, namely, that Samaria existed as a province. Ezra 4:10 centers the opposition to Judean reconstruction in "the city of Samaria," not the province (Ezra 4:17 is vague on the subject). Nehemiah identifies his chief opponent Sanballat only as a Horonite. Without the Elephantine papyri (e.g., *TAD* A 4.7) and the Samaria papyri and bullae (see Dušek 2007, 321–31), readers would not know that Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, a province with political claim to the title "Israel."

One can surmise that the "peoples of the lands" included certain Judeans and Samarians or Israelites. The Samarians were people *in* the land. As Knoppers (2011b, 24) notes, "Material and epigraphic evidence from the Persian and Hellenistic eras points to a tremendous cultural overlap between the areas of Samaria and Yehud." The Pentateuch that both communities shared not only suggests shared religious and cultural foundations, but also served as one of several signs of ongoing relationship between the two (ibid., 23–24; also Knoppers 2006, 2009a, 2013, 2019; Kartveit and Knoppers 2018). As Langille (2015, 381–382) observes, Samarians and Judeans shared ethnicity as defined by Hall (2000, 17). The names of Sanballat's sons, Shelemaiah and Delaiah, preserved in Elephantine (*TAD* A 4.7.29), attest to Yahwistic orientation. The marriage of the Judean high priest's grandson to the daughter of Sanballat (Neh 13:28–30) is one of several examples of close contacts between Samaria and the Judeans (Nehemiah's objection notwithstanding).

Thus, texts and archaeology confirm that a diverse population inhabited the Levant during the Persian period but that "the land" nonetheless included mostly kindred Judeans and Israelites. This would have been particularly challenging in terms of self-definition and may account for why Ezra 7–10 designates the community as "Israel" so emphatically. EN regards only certain Judeans (in my view not only the returnees)

as representing Israel. Judeans with a different self-understanding, as well as Israelites or Samarians, stand as the proverbial "elephant in the room." They cannot be named (Ezra 7–10 never uses "Judeans" either), and genealogical barriers cannot be used to disqualify them.

Samarians play a prominent role in the other stages of the reconstruction. In Ezra 3–6, Samaria's leader successfully heads the group that impedes building the temple (Ezra 4:8). In Nehemiah 1–6, Nehemiah's major opponent is Sanballat, Samaria's governor in extrabiblical sources. In both cases, EN refuses to let such "neighbors" join its community (see Ezra 4:3 and Neh 2:20).

The conclusion that Samarians were a major target of Ezra's reforms differs from earlier, debunked theories of a "Samaritan schism" at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Regarding Samaria, Knoppers (2006, 267) notes, "The work of contemporary scholars has provided a series of healthy correctives to the anachronistic, stereotyped, and reductive views of the past." It can now be supposed that Samaria was inhabited primarily by genuine Israelites, not foreign settlers. EN does not reflect a "Samaritan schism" but a stage in cultural and political negotiations that continued for centuries between the descendants of the so-called united monarchy (see Knoppers 2005a, 2013, 2019; Kartveit 2009; Kartveit and Knoppers 2018).

Ezra 9–10 chooses to separate from the kindred population in Samaria. Marriage with Israelite women from Samaria is most likely one of the issues in Ezra 9. These women, along with Judeans, are among those classified in Ezra 10 as foreign. EN's position contrasts with that of Chronicles, which recognizes genuine Israelites in Samaria (see, e.g., Knoppers 2005b, 314–27; Brett 2019, 79).

Grabbe (1998), Japhet (1983b), and Williamson (1985), among others, conclude that Ezra 9–10 regards the *gôlâ* alone as Israel. But this conclusion is not self-evident. Ezra 6:21 shows a willingness to incorporate some who choose to join the *gôlâ* community by separating from certain peoples of the lands and their practices. Ezra 9:1–2 apparently objects to those who chose otherwise and refused separation.

What historical factors underlie the crisis?

Many scholars continue to doubt the historicity of Ezra. Yet most nonetheless treat the conflict in Ezra 9 (and 10) as historical. There is a general consensus that some such conflict took place and that EN reliably, albeit tendentiously, reflects a version of it. One should note, however, that there is no more direct or secure evidence for this event than for others in EN.

It stands to reason, nevertheless, that new geopolitical developments during the Persian period inevitably influenced events in Judah and formed a likely backdrop to its internal developments. Cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in the Levant increased because of the Persian wars with Greece and Egypt and, subsequently, thanks to commerce. The coastal areas were densely populated by various nationalities (see, e.g., Lehmann 2014). Biblical texts and archaeology indicate that Judah, while slightly off the main trade routes, was nevertheless exposed to diverse populations. Mobility under the unifying rule of the Persian Empire brought many groups into increased contact. Nehemiah's encounter with merchants from Tyre and Sidon (Neh 13:15–20) and the marriages with foreign wives (Neh 13:23–27) confirm EN's recognition of contacts with foreigners.

Ezra 9–10 undertakes to establish communal boundaries in the midst of this flux; banning exogamy in Ezra 9–10 is integral to this project. Preference for endogamy was pervasive in antiquity. EN is unusual, however, in the detailed attention it gives the subject, and the definition of exogamy that it develops.

Ezra 9 reflects an inner-Judean controversy as to the identity and praxis of the reconstituted "Israel" in Judah. Investigations of historical factors that fueled this controversy have produced a rich array of studies. As already noted, scholars identify conflicts related to ethnicity (Brett 2008, 2016; Johnson 2011; Frevel 2011; Southwood 2011b, 2012), class (D. L. Smith 1991, 1994; Berquist 1995; Laird 2016), land rights (Eskenazi 1992a, 2006; Johnson 1995, 2011; Japhet 2007, 2019), and more (e.g., Ben Zvi 1995). Recognizing that these issues were inevitably intertwined, Brett (2006, 2016), Johnson (2011), and Laird (2016) posit a constellation of such dynamics at work. Laird (2016, 319) rightly identifies community building as the major thematic interest of Ezra 9–10. Religious and cultic orientation are integral to such a project. A survey of some major interpretations follows.

Smith-Christopher (1994, 2002; and D. L. Smith 1989, 1991) and Southwood (2012) use sociological and anthropological lenses to explain inner-Judean tension. Smith-Christopher emphasizes class as the source of conflict. Acknowledging the difficulty of assessing wealth and other class-related features of the competing groups, he nonetheless hypothesizes that status-seeking men in the exilic community sought to "marry up," that is, hypergamy, joining better established "peoples of the land" (Smith-Christopher 1994, 260). Berquist (2006) likewise regards class endogamy at work, overriding ethnic or other forms of endogamy and aiming to consolidate the wealth of the upper class. Marbury (2012, 2020) highlights priestly vested interests in relation to Persian imperial agenda.

Southwood, like most interpreters of Ezra 9–10, equates the textual account with historical reality. She investigates intermarriage, ethnicity, religious identity, and migration using modern anthropological tools and comparing the results with Ezra 9–10. Southwood (2012, 210) concludes that "Ezra's intermarriage crisis displays the classic symptoms of, and should be interpreted in light of, heightened ethnic consciousness as a result of return migration." In Ezra 9–10, Southwood argues, the need to establish boundaries reflects the perspective of returning migrants whose earlier structures of identity had been rendered obsolete in the diaspora. Such communities developed new criteria and imported these into Judah. The diaspora's ethnic identity, initially spurred by antiassimilationist survival mechanisms, "crystalizes in post-exilic Yehud into a primary source of identity" that differed from that of Judeans who remained in the land (ibid., 2).

While recognizing that the term "ethnicity" is perhaps too elastic for ancient societies, Southwood finds it still useful, privileging ethnicity as the dominant feature at work. Laird (2016, 318), however, considers exilic status as the decisive marker for communal membership, superseding ethnicity.

Johnson (1995, 182) emphasizes the dynamic, multifaceted nature of the issues but concludes that "essentially, the problem is one of economics and politics in the guise of ethnic solidarity." The problem "represents more than ethnic biases but concerns inheritance laws and property rights, community leadership and religious purity as well as the foundation of Yehud as a once again viable political entity" (ibid.); Johnson (2011, 94–108) also explores issues of gender, race, religion, sexuality, and social class.

Marbury (2020), who examines the rhetoric in Ezra 9–10, also interprets the issues in terms of land rights but identifies two driving vectors: imperial and priestly. He regards the meanings of the divorce rhetoric as multivalent, corresponding to the interests of different groups (ibid., 234–35). While affirming imperial rule, Ezra 9–10 also creates a counternarrative that undermines Persian authority (ibid.). "The rhetoric's political implications are oriented toward the empire," he writes, "but its cultic symbolism holds other meanings for the Jerusalem community. These meanings reinterpret the nature of the temple to counter the reality of imperial rule" (ibid.). In the imperial system, "endogamous marriages preserved wealth while exogamous marriages diminished wealth for the Jerusalem community" (ibid., 235; see also Marbury 2012).

Rom-Shiloni (2013, 253) discerns two groups competing for legitimacy as heirs of preexilic Israel: "Those who had Remained" and "the Babylonian Exiles." Each group claimed to be the exclusive heir to the title Israel. Like Jeremiah 24 and Ezek 33:23–29 in the exilic period, Ezra 9–10 (and EN as a whole) privileges the *gôlâ*.

Brett (2019) also identifies numerous factors that shape EN's "national imaginary." He adds, however, that Ezra represents a survival strategy that "reflects the memory of communal trauma initially shaped in Babylon and subsequently transformed on Judean soil" (ibid., 75). Studies of political trauma, such as modern conflicts in the Balkans, help Brett identify political trauma in EN (ibid., 78–80) and show that trauma can significantly shape the construction of communal identity for generations. In the case of Judah, intergenerational trauma heightened the *gôlâ* community's need for vigilance. Since Abrahamic heirs in the land did not experience exile, they could not be trusted to be as vigilant and thus were excluded (ibid., 80–81). This position did not lead to oppression of "remainees" in the land by elite repatriates, as some scholars conclude. Instead, it evolved into a shared discourse of several groups (ibid., 84–85).

Ben Zvi (1995) examines a variety of possible explanations for the position he labels as "Exilic Israel = Israel." He rejects the likelihood of a conflict over land rights because archaeological studies show that new settlements were built on land previously unoccupied (ibid., 110). For him, the conflict is better explained within "discourses of Jerusalem-centered Yahwism" (ibid., 148); thus, EN insists in the face of competing claims that "there was a continuity from Jerusalem centered Israel to Judahite monarchic Israel, and back to Mosaic Israel" (ibid., 149).

One can concur with Ben Zvi (1995), Southwood (2012), Rom-Shiloni (2013), and Brett (2019) that an overriding aspect of the conflict in Ezra 9 (and 10) resulted from different sensibilities that developed in different communities: those in diaspora and those who had remained in the land. Differing socioeconomic circumstances, likewise, would have played an important role, as Smith-Christopher (1994), Johnson (2011), and Laird (2016) indicate. The groups represented distinct interests, leading to conflicting views on the best ways to sustain communal life and identity in Judah. The relationship of Judeans to Israelites in Samaria was an aspect of the conflict.

Virtually all studies of Ezra 9–10 highlight the fact that EN privileges the *gôlâ* community. Yet one must also bear in mind that this emphasis in EN may serve as a defense against those in the land who discredited the *gôlâ*'s Judean legitimacy (see Ezek 33:23–29. Note that some twentieth-century scholars also questioned the *gôlâ*'s legitimacy; see, e.g., Carroll 1998 and "A History of Interpretation" in the Introduction).

As Rom-Shiloni (2013, 275–76) hypothesizes, an "exclusive inclusivity" characterized various Judean voices.. The biblical canon incorporates several competing Judean voices by including Ruth and Isaiah 56–66, as well as Chronicles and the Holiness source, alongside EN (for Isa 56–66, see Blenkinsopp 2019).

WHY DOES EZRA IN EN RESPOND AS HE DOES?

Ezra 9–10 depicts Ezra in sharp contrast to expectations generated by the royal letter in Ezra 7:12–26. Ezra does not initiate an investigation, and when a major transgression occurs, he does not punish offenders or even directly accuse them (Ezra 9). Instead, he turns to prayer and fasting until Shecaniah nominates him to take charge (10:1–6). Ezra 10 lingers on the procedures through which communal actions ensue. When Ezra finally issues a command (10:10–11), his demand is met with a counterproposal with which he complies (10:12–17).

Josephus, for whom the biblical scene is historical, interprets Ezra's actions in Ezra 9 as a psychological strategy: "And as he reasoned that, if he commanded them to put away their wives and the children born to them, he would not be listened to, he remained lying on the ground" (*Ant.* XI.v.3 // XI.142). But setting aside historicity, one can draw literary, political, exegetical, legal, and cultic conclusions from this portrait. In literary terms, Ezra is cast as a counterpoint to Nehemiah, a contrasting model of effective leadership (Eskenazi 1988a, esp. 127–54; Wright 2005). Nehemiah's largely authoritarian approach is countered by Ezra, who inspires the community to exercise collective agency in a more democratic fashion.

On the political side, EN uses Ezra to illustrate how to navigate the corridors of power appropriately. The contrast between Ezra's actions and what Artaxerxes' letter authorizes him to do (Ezra 7:12–26) underscores the point. Although possessing imperial authority, Ezra resorts to persuasion, appealing to Israel's own traditions and the collective will of the community. He acts as a public servant, not a royal one. The only authority Ezra acknowledges is Israel's God. The actions he legitimates (in Ezra 10) are those first sanctioned by the community, thereby setting a foundation for an indigenous infrastructure while the community is under foreign rule.

On the exegetical level, Ezra the priest and scribe interprets earlier traditions by applying them in a fresh way to new circumstances. Yoo (2017, 166–76) suggests that Ezra settles preexisting ambiguities in the Pentateuch. Ezra also demonstrates how to derive and apply laws anew. On a legal level, he defines certain marriages as officially dangerous to the community, setting in motion a demand for endogamous marriage (while also redefining what counts as endogamy). The final outcome is reported briefly in three or four verses (Ezra 10:16–19); the procedure is highlighted, spanning some thirty verses (9:1–10:15).

Taken together, these features in Ezra 9–10 present the community that EN seeks to establish as a model for life under imperial rule. The portrait of Ezra communicates the message(s).

THE COMPOSITION OF EZRA 9–10

Ezra 9–10 combines a first-person account (Ezra 9, the so-called Ezra Memoir) and a third-person account (Ezra 10). Debates continue about the purpose of preserving, creating, and combining these two sources, as well as the date, origin, and reliability

of each. Torrey (1896, 1910), who initiated important modern theories about EN, proposed the following original sequence of the Ezra source: Ezra 7–8, Nehemiah 8, and Ezra 9–10.

According to Torrey (1910, 238–43), all the material about Ezra (including Ezra himself) is the creation of the Chronicler. However, because of errors, the present arrangement, in Torrey's view, is "incoherent," and the "chronology is all wrong" (ibid., 253). For example, the rebuke in Ezra 9 implies that the law was already known (ibid.). Thus, Neh 7:70–73 is the necessary sequel to Ezra 8, followed by Neh 8:1–18 (ibid., 256; also Torrey 1896, 29–34). Torrey considers his reconstructed text "the *only* arrangement" (1910, 259; emphasis original). For Torrey, 1 Esdras and Josephus provide external evidence of early transposition, although he regards their arrangement as "an absolutely impossible one" (ibid., 255).

While Torrey (1896, 57; 1910, 240) wholly dismisses even a kernel of history in the Ezra narrative, he nevertheless calls it "the Chr [Chronicler's] masterpiece." The work is a "well executed . . . championing of Jewish sacred institutions . . . very interesting and very important, but by no means to be used as a source for the history of Israel under Persian rule" (1910, xxxi).

Like Torrey, but without denying the historicity of Ezra, many scholars, including Williamson (1985), Blenkinsopp (1988), Yoo (2017), and Japhet (2019), agree that Nehemiah 8 preceded Ezra 9–10 and formed the basis for the reforms in Ezra 9–10. But unlike Torrey, they consider the canonical arrangement to be deliberate, an editorial choice to link the work of the authors. In the original sequence, Williamson (1985, 127) suggests, "it was the community understanding and acceptance of the law which pricked their leaders' consciences into bringing their confession to Ezra."

In my view, the claim that Nehemiah 8 originally preceded Ezra 9 goes beyond, and even against, available evidence. All early versions, including 1 Esdras, place Nehemiah 8 after Ezra 9–10. Nothing in Ezra 9–10 requires a prior introduction of the *torah.* Ezra himself does not mention the *torah* even when virtually quoting Deuteronomy (Ezra 9:11–12). One can argue, in fact, that not knowing the *torah* led to its ostensible violation in Ezra 9; publicly introducing the *torah* was a response, meant to prevent future violations. Thus, Nehemiah 8 originally came after Ezra 10, where all ancient versions place it. To reverse the order requires more concrete evidence than Torrey and others offer.

Although Ezra 9–10 explicitly presents itself as two distinct genres, a first-person memoir (Ezra 9) and a third-person narrative (Ezra 10), Kapelrud (1944) claimed to have shown that both come from the same hand. Mowinckel (1961), Rudolph (1949), and Williamson (1985) concur.

As Mowinckel and Williamson rightly note, switches within a single work between first-and third-person accounts are familiar from ancient writings (Williamson 1985, 145–47; see also Eskenazi 2010). The book of Daniel, the story of Ahikar (fifth century BCE), and the historian Polybius (second century BCE) are some early examples (see further Eskenazi 2010). Torrey (1910, 238–39), according to whom the Chronicler invented the entire narrative, viewed the Ezra Memoir an imitation of the Nehemiah Memoir. But Mowinckel (1961) claimed that the Chronicler was working with an earlier source, composed by an admirer of Ezra. Williamson (1985, xxxi) credits Ezra or someone on his behalf with composing the Ezra source (which includes all

of Ezra 7–10 except for 7:12–26), aiming "to show as nearly as possible how his activity conformed to his commission." In Williamson's view, some features challenge the likelihood that the material was composed *de novo* by a much later writer. Switches between first and third person are best explained as "editorial activity on a first-person narrative" (ibid., xxxi), which also omitted some of the original material from the earlier source. Yoo (2017, 84–88) follows Williamson but includes Ezra 7:12–26 in the Ezra Memoir.

According to Williamson (and Japhet 2019), Ezra fulfilled his mission during his first year (since Neh 8 preceded Ezra 9–10). Williamson (1985, xxxii) explains the seemingly inconclusive nature of Ezra 9–10 by reference to Ezra's frustrations with the slow progress, and his obligation to submit a report. The Ezra Memoir shows "how Ezra fulfilled the tasks entrusted to him" (ibid., 149), and the list in Ezra 10 provides the necessary evidence. For Williamson (ibid., 127) the change between "I" and "he" is of little significance.

As Williamson (1985, xxxii) rightly acknowledges, all views on this subject, including his own, have a speculative element. I agree with Williamson and Japhet (2019) that Nehemiah 8 belongs to the Ezra source, but I question the hypothesis that it preceded Ezra 9. I find no text-based evidence that would justify this rearrangement, and no narrative necessity. I also discern important differences between Ezra 9 and 10. For example, Ezra 10 explicitly objects to "foreign" women, a term never used in Ezra 9. Ezra 9 refers to marriages of "sons" and "daughters," whereas Ezra 10 has "men" and "women." Terms for marriage differ: "give" and "take" in Ezra 9 are replaced with forms of *y.š.b.,* "to settle," in Ezra 10. Ezra 9 mentions "peoples of the lands" whereas Ezra 10 has "peoples of the land" (for more on the differences, see Dor 2003, esp. 27–28).

Furthermore, it is far from obvious that Ezra 9–10 is best construed as documenting Ezra's compliance with the royal commission, even with Nehemiah 8 attached. A number of scholars use precisely the perceived disjunction between Ezra's commission and his activities as evidence against the historical reliability of much of Ezra 7–10 (see Batten 1913, 306–8; Janzen 2000). Many of the details (the prayer, to begin with) would be inappropriate in a report to the king. I cannot therefore agree that the change between "I" and "he" is insignificant, even if its purpose is not easy to decipher.

What might this shift between "I" and "he" convey? The first-person account provides an authoritative voice (Ezra's) for interpreting legal traditions. The third-person perspective, then, confirms Ezra's achievements and corroborates them. Additionally, the shift acknowledges different perspectives that may account for different positions in the unfolding narrative, such as the tension between Ezra's interpretation and demand (Ezra 9:6–15 and 10:10–11) and Shecaniah's (10:1–6).

Several important studies depart from the view of an original unity or common authorship of Ezra 9–10, undertaking a diachronic analysis (Dor 2003, 2006; Pakkala 2004, 2011; Wright 2005; and Frevel and Conczorowski 2011). They largely agree about the scope of the larger units but disagree about the relative date and the history that the sources reflect.

According to Dor (2003, 2006), Ezra 9–10 is composed of three sources: Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:6–15), a short narrative (10:2–6), and a long narrative (10:7–44). Identifying the uniqueness of style and approach that underlies each section, Dor concludes that Ezra 10:7–44 is the earliest and 9:6–15 the latest, with 10:2–6 between.

Wright (2005, 250) notes that since the nineteenth century it has been commonly assumed that the compiler of EN "simply recast several sections of Ezra's 'memoirs' into the third person." Wright suggests instead that the "author" of EN "intends to draw a sharp distinction between excerpts from source material in 7:12–26 and 7:27–9:15" and Ezra 10 (ibid.). Ezra 10, additionally, is just what it purports to be: the work of a later hand (ibid., 251).

In agreement with Kratz (2000, 84), Wright (2005, 253) considers Ezra's prayer to have been composed with Nehemiah 1 in view, listing formal and linguistic similarities, including the emphasis on *pĕlêṭâ.* The Ezra material as a whole, he notes, was constructed as a counterpoint to the earlier Nehemiah portions in order to reframe the ideology and nature of the reconstruction. In the final form of EN, Ezra 9 prepares the reader to regard Nehemiah's wall as necessary for maintaining separation from "the peoples of the lands" (ibid., 255).

Pakkala (2011, 81) considers Ezra 9 the earliest source: "Ezra's prayer is probably a single expansion in Ezra 9, whereas the *gôlâ* and the Levitical editors both represent a broader editorial group of several successive editors who revised other parts of the composition as well" (see also Pakkala 2004). Although Ezra 9 is the earliest, the prayer is a late insertion into it and a form of inner-biblical development (2011, 83–85). According to Pakkala (2011, 81 n. 7), *gôlâ* editors "may have edited only Ezra 1–6, 7–10 and Neh 8, whereas at least some of the latest Levitical editors were probably familiar with the 'Nehemiah Memoir' as well."

Pakkala (2011) also considers Ezra 9 and 10 to present contrasting positions. In Ezra 9, two groups were living in the land when Ezra arrived: Israelites who remained and non-Israelites. But for the *gôlâ* editors, "only non-Israelites were living in the land"; for these returning exiles, "only the returning exiles could be Jews" (ibid., 85). Ezra 9:4, an addition by the *gôlâ* editors, exemplifies this perspective, as does 10:6–8, which presents a different perspective from that of its source. Pakkala links identity in this section to "the Law," introduced by those of the *gôlâ* and imposed on those who had remained in the land.

Frevel and Conczorowski (2011) also undertake a diachronic analysis but focus on three sources: Ezra 9, Ezra 10, and Nehemiah 13. They hold that Ezra 9–10 (which they date to the early Hellenistic period) depends on Nehemiah 13 (the late Persian period). Ezra 9–10 is "consequence, clarification and intensification of Neh 13" (ibid., 32), a culmination of several biblical antiexogamy texts (including Num 25). In their view, exogamy in EN refers to marriage with anyone outside the *gôlâ* community (ibid., 33).

Like other matters of history in EN, the compositional issues cannot be resolved conclusively. This commentary concentrates on the messages that emerge from the combined units and perspectives in Ezra 9–10.

D. The Obstacle Overcome: The Community Resolves to Separate from Foreign Wives and Prohibit Exogamy (10:1–44)

INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

Ezra 10 depicts overcoming the obstacle to building the community that is integral to the house of YHWH: the people consent to ban exogamy and separate from foreign

wives. In this section, a community member proposes a solution (Ezra 10:1–6). A procedure for implementation follows (Ezra 10:7–17), and the results are recorded (Ezra 10:18–44). Ezra 10 describes reforms that aim to prevent intermarriage. On the basis of Ezra 9, it redefines community boundaries and criteria for membership. Marriage comes under communal, not merely familial, control. As in fifth-century BCE Athens, one can suspect some tension between spheres of authority: that of the community and that of the household.

The anonymous narrator in Ezra 10 replaces the "I" of Ezra in the Ezra Memoir, enabling EN to represent diverse perspectives. While Ezra remains the major figure, others emerge and also play critical roles.

The most pressing debates about Ezra 10 pertain to the outcome of the conflict around marriage. Were "foreign" wives expelled? Most scholars, following 1 Esd 9:36, conclude that all "foreign women" were expelled from the Judean community (and that Ezra 10:18–44 lists their husbands), but it is striking that Ezra 10 does not say this. It leaves the outcome ambiguous (see Ezra 10:44 and Comments at 10:18–44).

The structure of Ezra 10:1–44 is as follows:

1. Communal response and Shecaniah's proposal (10:1–6)
2. Communal decision and its implementation (10:7–17)
3. Results and conclusion (10:18–44)

1. Communal Response and Shecaniah's Proposal (10:1–6)

10 [1]And as Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, there gathered around him from Israel a very large congregation: men, women, and children, for the people wept with much weeping. [2]And Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, responded and said to Ezra: "We have committed sacrilege against our God, and we have settled foreign women from the peoples of the land. And now there is hope for Israel concerning this. [3]And now, let us make a covenant with our God to send out all women and any who is born from them, with the counsel of the Lord and of those trembling at the commandment of our God; and according to the *torah* it shall be done. [4]Rise up, for the task is yours and we are with you; be strong and act." [5]And Ezra rose up and made the chiefs of the priests and Levites and all Israel swear to act in accordance with this word and they swore. [6]And Ezra rose up from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib; and he went there; bread he did not eat and water he did not drink, for he was in mourning over the sacrilege of the exiles.

Introduction

Ezra's public mourning and confession in Ezra 9 prompt the community to coalesce. One member proposes that women and children be expelled "according to the *torah*" (Ezra 10:3). He nominates Ezra as leader, to which all consent.

Notes

10:1. *And as Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, there gathered around him from Israel a very large congregation: men, women,*

and children, for the people wept with much weeping. The narrator reports that Ezra's mourning and prayer elicited remorse and attracted supporters. We now discover Ezra's location: before the temple. King Solomon (1 Kgs 8:30–39) designated the temple as a unique locus for prayer, providing special access to God (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 8:30). Solomon recited his prayer while on his knees with outstretched arms (1 Kgs 8:54). Ezra is thus aligned with tradition.

praying and confessing. The grammar suggests that Ezra's actions are continuous, while people gradually gather. Although Ezra's prayer is labeled a confession here, it differs from other biblical prayers of confession (1 Kgs 8:49–53, Dan 9:16–19, Neh 1:8–11) in ending without a plea.

there gathered around him from Israel a very large congregation. Ezra's public action prompts others to coalesce as a community and offer a response to the crisis at hand. In EN, decisions emerge from this group.

Israel. The term in Ezra 10:1–6 stands for Ezra's community as a whole (as in Ezra 7:28 and 8:25). First Esdras 8:91 has "Jerusalem" instead of "Israel."

congregation. The term elsewhere refers to a duly constituted community (see Eskenazi 1988a; Oswald 2012); Blenkinsopp's (1988, 187–88) "assembly" captures the sense, but to Blenkinsopp it means "a crowd, not a liturgical assembly (cf. 10:8)." Williamson (1985, 143), however, acknowledges religious overtones, and Maier (2017, 84) rightly notes that *qāhāl* "is often mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah as the body who is informed and sometimes decides upon matters of public interest (Ezra 10:12, 14; Neh 5:13; 8:2)."

men, women, and children, for the people wept with much weeping. Ezra's supporters include women and children, who would have had special interest in the proceedings.

women. EN explicitly acknowledges women in three significant communal gatherings: (1) here, responding to Ezra, (2) during the climactic public reading of the *torah* (Neh 8:2–3), and (3) at the signing of the communal pledge (Neh 10:29–30). However, these women are never named (the prophetess Noadiah is the only woman clearly named; but also see Notes at Ezra 8:10). By specifying the presence of women at these important junctures, EN indicates their legitimate participation in public events. Indirectly, this points to why foreign women would be a concern.

10:2. *And Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, responded and said to Ezra.* Ezra has not exercised his royally sanctioned authority and imposed a law. Instead, a community member takes the lead. Shecaniah is a popular postexilic name with an appealing theology ("God dwells"). The Elam family is one of the largest groups (Ezra 2:7 and Neh 7:12), six of whom had married foreign wives. The intermarried include one named Jehiel, like Shecaniah's father (Ezra 10:26). There is no basis for supposing, as Fried (2015a, 393) does, that Shecaniah was a Persian official following Persian orders.

we have committed sacrilege against our God. Shecaniah, like Ezra, uses the plural "we," confessing to a collective transgression. Defining these marriages as sacrilegious (i.e., cultic violations) is an innovation articulated in Ezra 9–10 (see "sacrilege" in Notes at Ezra 9:2).

We have settled foreign women from the peoples of the land. Shecaniah's use of "settled" is crucial for understanding the literary and historical issues at work, as well as some metaphorical allusions.

we have settled. Heb. *wannōšēb,* from *y.š.b.,* "to settle," "to sit," or "to dwell." This verb in the *hiphil* occurs thirty-five times outside of EN, consistently referring to dwell-

ing or being established (in a place or a position). The LXX's *ekathisamen* has the same semantic range. All seven times it appears in EN, however (Ezra 10:2, 10, 14, 17, 18; Neh 13:23, 27), pertain to alliances with foreign women.

The unique use in EN becomes an important clue to issues at stake. Translations that render the term in EN simply as "married" (e.g., the NRSV) obscure such a clue. "Bringing to our homes" in the NJPS is more to the point. Fried (2015a, 388) also catches the sense with "caused . . . to dwell [with us]." First Esdras 8:92 has *synōkisamen,* a conventional term for marriage.

The language of "settling" in relation to marriage appears nowhere else in the Bible. Japhet (2007, 151–52) suggests that the language repositions the women as secondary wives, which allows for annulment (see also Southwood 2012, 73–75). Fried (2015a, 392) similarly proposes a deliberate obfuscation to suggest that no legitimate marriages took place.

More can be surmised, however. Settling the land is implicit in this terminology. Ezra's prayer emphasized danger to possessing the land. Shecaniah also highlights the threat to inheriting the land. The language of settling or possessing land carries crucial political and socioeconomic implications. Landownership (not simply marriage) may be at stake (see also Hoglund 1992; Eskenazi 1992a, 2006; and Smith-Christopher 1994). "Settling" foreign women reverses the divine mandate to Israel to settle the promised land (see further Eskenazi 2006, esp. 519–24). Alter's (2018, 827) translation "brought back" envisions a different scenario based on the Hebrew *š.w.b.* rather than *y.š.b.* but is difficult to support by the grammar. He uses "settled" at Neh 13:24 (ibid., 862).

foreign women. The unspecified identity of the women in Ezra 9:1–2 is replaced for the first time by a concrete descriptor: "foreign" ("alien" in the LXX). This characterization recurs consistently throughout Ezra 10 (10:2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 44) and Neh 13:26 and 27. The designation "foreign women" appears only in EN and 1 Kgs 11:1 and 8. Ruth, however, identifies herself as a foreign woman (Ruth 2:10), and Rachel and Leah complain about being treated as "foreign" by their father (Gen 31:15). References to a foreign woman are frequent only in Proverbs, where this figure is cast as dangerous and seductive (e.g., Prov 2:16), in parallel with the "strange woman" (*'iššâ zārâ*).

Proverbs 7 presents the foreign woman as a member of the community (she brings the *šĕlāmîm* offering to the sanctuary and even seems to follow the injunction in Lev 7:15–20 to eat it on the same day). Maier (1998, 99) concludes, therefore, that "even women belonging to the same ethnic group may become 'strange' if they do not adhere to social conventions." Thus, "foreign" (*nokrî*), while usually denoting national or ethnic foreignness, also denotes "strangeness within a kinship group (Ps. 69.9; Job 19.15; Gen 31.15)" (ibid., 93; also Maier 2017). Maier regards the issue in Proverbs less in terms of ethnicity and more as a concern with adultery or sexual behavior that violates family ties (1998, 102).

Both Maier and Camp (1985) note that in Proverbs, associating with this "strange" or "foreign" woman has dire consequences regarding the land. Camp (ibid., 269) notes that "Prov 2:16–22 makes explicit the dependence of possession of the land on correct sexual relations." The similarities to EN are suggestive. From Proverbs, one can conclude that "foreign" is not exclusively or simply an ethnic category but one also determined by behavior. The exclusionary criterion, namely, the practice of abominations in

Ezra 9, now results in categorizing them as foreign, including even those of Judean or Israelite origin.

the peoples of the land. In the background lurks God's command to Israel under Moses and Joshua to replace such people. The singular form of "land," together with the plural for "peoples," appears in EN only here and in Ezra 10:11. Given that "the land" in the Bible typically refers to the promised land, it would encompass Persian-period Judah and Samaria. The latter was inhabited mostly by Israelites although 2 Kings 17 maintains (against historical evidence) that only foreigners lived there after 722 BCE. "The peoples of the land" implies those living in this land, including Israelites and Judeans, some women among them now cast as "foreign." Dor (2003, 34) finds the difference in terminology between Ezra 9 ("lands") and 10 ("land") one of several signs of different sources for the crisis about marriage in Ezra 9–10.

And now there is hope for Israel concerning this. Shecaniah proposes a solution, aspects of which are ambiguous.

hope. The Hebrew *miqweh* carries two distinct meanings: (1) it may refer to a collection of water, such as a cistern used for ritual purification (Lev 11:36); (2) it can mean "hope," like the related noun *tiqvah* (as in Zech 9:12). Jeremiah refers to God three times as Israel's *miqweh* (Jer 14:8, 17:13, 50:7) and also preserves the connection between water and hope: "O *miqweh Israel!* O YHWH! . . . they have forsaken the fountain of living water, YHWH" (Jer 17:13).

The LXX's *hypomonē,* "strength" or "endurance," conveys a different idea: the power to overcome the obstacle. First Esdras 8:92 has *elpis,* a common term for "hope."

10:3. *And now, let us make a covenant with our God to send out all women and any who is born from them, with the counsel of the Lord and of those trembling at the commandment of our God; and according to the torah it shall be done.* Shecaniah's radical proposal enlists support from God, the pious, and the *torah* for sending away wives and children. But the language is unclear.

let us make a covenant. Lit. "cut a covenant"; see, for example, Deut 28:69. Typically, God or kings initiate covenants. Shecaniah highlights the role of the community.

to send out. Heb. *lĕhôṣî', hiphil* infinitive of *y.ṣ.'*. This commonly means to take something out in a locative sense, most often for when God takes Israel out of Egypt (e.g., Exod 6:13). When God is the subject of the verb, it usually indicates deliverance. When Israel or individuals are the subject, it often entails removing something defiling from the camp (Num 19:3; see also 2 Chr 29:5, 16). This sense may be intended here. In Ezra 1:7 it refers to relocating the temple vessels.

The term differs from those for expulsion such as *g.r.š.,* "to expel" (Gen 3:24), or *š.l.ḥ.,* "to send away" (Exod 8:16), or for divorce (Exod 18:2; Deut 24:1, 3). It differs as well from other terms associated with divorce or marital separation such as *ś.n.'*. "to hate," in the Elephantine documents (e.g., *TAD* B 3.3.7 // Kraeling 2) and possibly in Mal 2:16.

The LXX's *ekbalein,* which 1 Esd 8:93 also uses, implies rejection, unlike the LXX translation of this verb elsewhere as *exēgagen* (e.g., Exod 13:3, when God takes Israel out of Egypt).

The cultic meaning of the Hebrew term "to take out" contributes to Dor's (2006, 157–62 and 173–74) theory that the proposal supposes a ritual (not a legal) change of status, resulting neither in divorce nor in expulsion. She suggests that the families were

to return home intact at the end of the symbolic ritual. Southwood (2012, 89–90) effectively contests this conclusion.

all women. Presumably Shecaniah means "all foreign women" (so 1 Esd 8:93). See Exod 1:22, where Pharaoh declares that all baby boys should be thrown into the Nile.

and any who is born from them. The typical biblical position is that a person's lineage is determined by the father. Ezra 10:3 differs, presenting the relationship between mother and child as the defining bond. Japhet (2007) points out that children of slaves remain with their mothers according to Exod 21:4. In her view, Shecaniah's solution thereby may imply a demotion in status, treating these women as one would treat secondary wives or slaves (ibid., esp. 150–53; but see COMMENTS below).

with the counsel of the Lord and of those trembling at the commandment of our God. Which counsel and commandment are meant? The answer is unclear. Both the LXX and 1 Esdras attempt to clarify by rendering the phrase differently from the MT at several points. The LXX has "as you shall advise: arise, and alarm them with the commands of our God; and let it be done according to the law." First Esdras 8:94 has "as seems good to you and to all who obey the law of the Lord."

counsel. The noun most often connotes a deliberate strategy that can be overturned or frustrated (e.g., Isa 10:8, 30:1; Jer 6:6). Some scholars suppose that a plan has already been devised, taking the detail to be historically reliable. Thus Williamson (1985, 150) concludes, "It is thus evident that Ezra had previously given some instruction on the matter" (see also Blenkinsopp 1988, 181; Japhet 2007, 143). Such a reading is unnecessary. Shecaniah is calling for a plan that should follow God's teachings and be consistent with the *torah.*

the Lord. Heb. *ʾadōnay.* Both the LXX and 1 Esdras choose Ezra as the subject. But *ʾadōnay,* "my masters" or "my lords," serves as a reference to God in the Bible more than three hundred times, most often in exilic and postexilic texts (especially Ezekiel and Lamentations). It refers to God in Neh 1:11 and 4:8. This plural noun becomes the common Jewish designation for God's name in prayer.

Nowhere in the Bible does God require the expulsion of foreign wives. Many translators and commentators therefore suggest, instead, that "Lord" refers to Ezra. But so far Ezra has not proposed a solution. Williamson (1985, 143 n. 3c) translates "my lord," noting that God does not "counsel" but commands. However, both Isaiah (e.g., Isa 46:10) and Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 49:20) refer to a divine plan with the term "counsel" that Shecaniah uses.

The LXX and 1 Esd 8:94 explicitly make Ezra the source of the advice, possibly reading *ʾădōnî* in the singular, "my lord" (so, e.g., Williamson 1985, Fried 2015a, and Japhet 2019). But several early manuscripts have the divine name, YHWH (see critical notes in *BHS*). Hence, interpreting Ezra 10:3 as referring to God is preferred here.

Still, it is impossible to determine which plan of either God or Ezra is meant. Ezra had not proposed a solution, and God in the Bible does not demand the removal of foreign wives. Shecaniah's proposal, like Ezra's prayer, is a work of complex exegetical associations. Japhet (2019, 238), who supposes a reference to Ezra, observes that Shecaniah grounds himself in two basic sources of authority: human and the *torah.* The present translation includes a third: God.

those trembling. The LXX and 1 Esdras omit this term. There is no reason to suppose (as does Blenkinsopp [1988, 178–79] here and in Ezra 9:4) a specific sectarian

group, identical with the *ḥărēdîm* (Isa 66:2, 5), forerunners of the pietistic sects of the Hasmonean period. Everything in EN points to Ezra (and Nehemiah) enlisting a broad spectrum of the community in order to establish norms, rather than securing a sectarian niche (on the *ḥărēdîm* here and in modern ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups, see Eskenazi and Judd 1994).

according to the torah *it shall be done.* Lit. "like the *torah* it will be done," or, "let it be done according to the *torah.*" Readers commonly suppose that Shecaniah claims that the *torah* prescribes divorcing foreign wives. But no such instructions appear in the Pentateuch. Shecaniah may be claiming that such instructions do appear in the *torah* or that the subsequent procedures must follow *torah* requirements, not necessarily that the *torah* demands this specific action. A procedure is described in Deut 17:11 ("in accordance with the *torah* . . . and the *mišpāṭ* that they will tell you, you shall act"). The expression is akin to "according to the Constitution" when applied to modern situations not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution (see also "as is written" in Notes at Ezra 3:2). This interpretation is the more compelling given that Ezra's own proposal (Ezra 10:10–11) differs from Shecaniah's.

Fried (2015a, 394), who translates *torah* here as "law," supposes that such action entailed "providing women with their *ketubah,* their written marriage contract entitling the women to the return of all the items of their dowry, plus any other items or funds promised them by their husband that was written in their marriage contract at the time of their betrothal." Japhet (2019, 238; 2007, 150–53) reaches the opposite conclusion. Perceiving a demotion of the women's status, she suggests that this facilitates sending women out like slave women, that is, without divorce. Since Ezra 9–10 shows no interest in compensation for, or the subsequent fate of, ousted family members, it is not possible to determine the legal implications of Shecaniah's proposal.

the torah. This reference has contributed to the theory that Nehemiah 8 preceded Ezra 9, with the *torah* here referring to the book that Ezra introduced in Nehemiah 8. But dependence on Nehemiah 8 is unnecessary and does not solve the problem since no *torah* law demands expulsion. The *torah,* however, can be invoked without recourse to Nehemiah 8, given earlier references in Ezra 3:2 and 7:10.

10:4. *Rise up, for the task is yours and we are with you.* Shecaniah concludes by exhorting Ezra to take charge. In EN, Ezra assumes power when local Judeans commission him, never resorting to his imperial authorization. First Esdras 8:94 has "as seems good to you and to all who obey the law of the Lord."

we are with you. Shecaniah underscores communal support.

be strong and act. This exhortation echoes blessings of strength in Deut 31:23, when Moses commissions Joshua.

10:5. *And Ezra rose up and made the chiefs of the priests and Levites and all Israel swear to act in accordance with this word and they swore.* Only now, at the exhortation of a member of the community, does Ezra take charge and issue orders.

Fried (2015a, 394) perceives the scene differently: "There is no huge assembly here; we have only a few Persian officials who met with Ezra shortly after his arrival." Fried removes as later accretion all passages that contradict this hypothesis, including references to priests, Levites, and all Israel. The officers, she claims, were all Persian, and the Persian administration demanded that they not intermarry (ibid., 395–96). In this, Fried treats the event as historically reliable yet distorted by the final form of EN. But

neither the text nor available historical information about Persian administration supports this interpretation. It is not likely that the Persian court would dispatch its elite, that is, Persians, to micromanage the province of Judah in such matters. It would make little sense for Ezra to make Persian officials swear, as Fried proposes. To suppose a Persian prohibition of intermarriage goes against the evidence from the Persian Empire, where intermarriage was accepted (see the COMMENTS at Ezra 10:7–17).

The oath implies that the entire proposal is ratified, though Ezra will deviate from it.

all Israel. This most likely refers to leaders or all the assembled (Ezra 10:1), who now take responsibility for solving the problem. We have no information as to how many people are included here.

word. Heb. *dābār* means "word," "speech," "a thing," or "subject matter."

10:6. *And Ezra rose up from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib.* Ezra retires from the most public place. It is no longer clear what "the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib" conveyed to the early readers of EN. It does not say that the chamber was at the temple or that Jehohanan was a priest. But most interpretations reasonably assume such identification, and some calculate the date of Ezra's mission on this basis (see below).

chamber. The LXX has *gazophylakion,* "treasury." In biblical texts *liškâ* describes an official space, typically connected with the temple (see, e.g., Ezek 40:46; Neh 10:38, 39, 40; 13:4, 5, 8, 9). In Ezra 8:29, "chambers of the house of YHWH" designates the ultimate destination of the silver and gold contributed by the diaspora. In Nehemiah 10, "chambers of our God" designates the places for storing communal contributions (Neh 10:38–40). Possibly this chamber is part of the temple complex, and the verse may illustrate cooperation between Ezra and local priests (although the temple is not mentioned).

Jehohanan son of Eliashib. A number of scholars identify this priest with Jehohanan the high priest (*kahana rabba,* lit. "great priest") in the Elephantine documents dated 407 BCE (*TAD* A 4.7.18 // Cowley 30.18). This could place Ezra's mission in 398 BCE, the seventh year of Artaxerxes II, not Artaxerxes I. This position enjoys the support of many scholars (e.g., Galling 1964, Rowley 1965, and Fried 2015a). In this view, Jehohanan is son or grandson of the high priest Eliashib in Neh 12:22–23 (Fried 2003b; Fried 2015a, 395; Japhet 2019, 239–40).

The name Jehohanan appears in the Bible only in EN and Chronicles, where it belongs to seven or eight different individuals. In addition to the reference in the Elephantine documents, "Johanan *hakkohen"* appears on a fourth-century BCE coin (see Fried 2003b).

The frequency of the names Eliashib and Jehohanan in postexilic sources, however, makes specific identification less than fully secure, allowing some scholars to suppose that Ezra came during Artaxerxes I's reign (e.g., Williamson 1985; Blenkinsopp 1988). Three different people named Eliashib appear in Ezra 10 alone, none of them a priest (Ezra 10:24, 27, 36). The popularity of the name may be rooted in its meaning, "God will restore"—a message of special relevance to the returning community. Williamson (1985, 151) thus suggests differentiating between Eliashib the high priest (and his family) and another priest named Eliashib.

Even if the references were to the same high priestly family, the practice of papponomy among the upper class in the Persian period suggests to Cross (1975) that

this Jehohanan son of Eliashib could be the father of the Eliashib in Nehemiah's time (on priestly lines, see also VanderKam 2004). But using priestly lists to date the high priests is problematic. Furthermore, the reference to the chamber of Jehohanan is the narrator's description of a place. It need not refer to a contemporary of Ezra but to the name of the place during its author's time. In this case the name may belong to a figure later than Ezra (for a detailed discussion, see Williamson 1985, 151–54, and esp. Suiter 1992). One can also add that Eliashib plausibly could have been the high priest during Nehemiah's time in 444 BCE, with a son who, thirteen years earlier, was old enough to have a chamber in the temple.

A connection with Elephantine's Jehohanan is plausible, but because it is impossible to ascertain the nature, function, and reliability of priestly lists, it seems best to avoid major historical revisions on their basis. Thus, many commentators prefer the canonical sequence until proved otherwise (for reviews of positions, see Rowley 1965; Suiter 1992; and "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah?" in the Introduction).

bread he did not eat and water he did not drink, for he was in mourning. Ezra's continued mourning communicates that the issue is not yet resolved. Later Jewish traditions adopted similar practices of mourning in cases of perceived apostasy.

over the sacrilege of the exiles. The scene's conclusion reinscribes the religious nature of the transgression (see "sacrilege" in Notes at Ezra 9:2 and Ezra 10:2).

Comments

Ezra 10 describes how the community overcame the obstacle to the rebuilding of YHWH's house in Ezra 9, namely, marriage with women "in the land." The Ezra Memoir ends with Ezra 9:15. In Ezra 10:1–6, an anonymous narrator describes the communal response to Ezra's message. Shecaniah, a member of the community, offers a solution to the problem that Ezra identified and urges Ezra to take charge.

Ezra 10 introduces new vocabulary and ideas (e.g., Shecaniah labels the problematic women "foreign," whereas Ezra 9 does not; the men in Ezra 10:2 "settle" the women, not marry them, as in 9:2), although Torrey (1896, 1910), Kapelrud (1944), and Mowinckel (1961) argue that both Ezra 9 and 10 come from the same hand. The changes in Ezra 10, however, differentiate it from Ezra 9. For Williamson (1985), these changes constitute a stylistic device not necessitating an explanation. For Dor (e.g., 2003, 43–44) they indicate that Ezra 10:1–6 is a separate source with a more extreme position than that of Ezra 10:7–44.

Regardless of origin, the shift to a third-person report in Ezra 10 communicates a different perspective from Ezra's in Ezra 9. Consequently, whereas many interpretations conflate Shecaniah's position with Ezra's (or EN as a whole), the shift between points of view in Ezra 9 and 10 guides the reader away from simply equating the two. Ezra's solution (Ezra 10:10–11) differs from Shecaniah's. Ezra 10:3–5 authorizes Ezra to pursue the matter according to the *torah* (or his own judgment, if one reads "my lord," not "Lord" in 10:3). Ezra's demand does not necessarily coincide with Shecaniah's.

Many suppose that Shecaniah in Ezra 10:3 bases his solution on the *torah,* but (as noted above) also observe that no relevant ruling appears in the Pentateuch. Japhet (2007; 2019, 237–39), however, argues that Shecaniah does draw on Pentateuchal (and Babylonian) legal tradition. His language reconfigures the legal situation by demoting the women's status from that of legitimate wives. Focusing on the social and

legal aspects in Shecaniah's speech, Japhet identifies the proposal's goal as protecting inheritance: the rigorous exclusion of the women and Shecaniah's specific terminology seek to justify the dissolution of certain unions rather than resorting to a process of divorce. Demoting the women to a secondary status means that the unions can be simply annulled.

In Japhet's view, Shecaniah demotes the women by using "send out" (Ezra 10:3), which evokes legal categories specific to slave women (e.g., Exod 21:2–5) and also cultic associations (2 Chr 29:5). The children must also be sent away with their mothers because, as children of slave women, their status depends on their mother's (Exod 21:3–4) (Japhet 2007, 149). Japhet (ibid., 152) regards the clause "those born from them" as yet another sign of denigration; it avoids the usual terminology for legitimate motherhood. Shecaniah's use of the verb *y.š.b.* (Ezra 10:2), which Japhet translates as "seated" or "placed," further delegitimizes the unions. Avoiding typical terms for marriage suggests that no genuine marriage took place (ibid., 153). Japhet (ibid., 155–56) concludes, however, that implementation of Shecaniah's proposal proved impossible and it remained on paper only, never enforced, except in the case of the four priests (10:18–19).

Japhet (2019, 237) also calls attention to Deut 21:12–13, which depicts the incorporation of a woman into the household using the verb *y.š.b.:* "bring her home to your house: she shall . . . remain [*wĕyāšĕbâ*] in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife" (NRSV). The woman is freed (not sold) if the husband is unsatisfied.

Hoglund (1992), Eskenazi (1992a, 2006), and Washington (1994) also connect the issue in Ezra 9–10 with land loss. But, as I suggest (in contrast to Japhet), the verb *y.š.b.,* "to settle," intensifies the connection of the women to inherited land, thereby making the threat more consequential for the community as a whole (Eskenazi 2006); the marriages threaten ownership of the land, reversing God's command and promise. Marbury (2020) implies something similar on this point. Southwood (2012, 79), however, doubts that inheritance is at stake, given that, according to her, Ezra 9–10 uses the language of pollution originating from ethnic impurity. But dismissing a relationship to land on this basis may be too hasty. Explicit language of pollution belongs to Ezra 9, not to Shecaniah's speech. The two perspectives need to be distinguished (conveyed by the shift between "I" and "he," even if originating from the same hand). The reader is invited to discern two perspectives. Ezra will rely on only one part of Shecaniah's proposal in his next speech.

A great deal hangs on how one understands "the *torah"* in Ezra 10:3. The reference to the *torah* is one of several reasons why some surmise that Nehemiah 8, with its reading of the *torah,* preceded Ezra 9–10; in such an interpretation, Shecaniah points to it as a shared source. However, *torah* in EN plays a role earlier (Ezra 3:2); it is already known to some. Nehemiah 8 is not the only logical backdrop.

Yet Shecaniah's proposal does not necessarily claim a *torah* "prooftext" for sending away women and children. Rather, the plan's implementation, namely the process of sending out, must be done in accordance with the *torah* (Ezra 10:3). Deuteronomy 17:9–11 authorizes Levitical priests and judges to determine what the *torah* teaches, and Shecaniah nominates Ezra to that role. The LXX makes this explicit: "as you shall advise; arise and let it be done according to the law [or 'as the law is']." First Esdras 8:94 has, instead, "as seems good to you and to all who obey the law of the Lord."

The uncertainty of the phrase notwithstanding, Ezra secures his commissioning with an oath. Ezra and Shecaniah both regard the crisis as sacrilege (see "sacrilege" in Notes at Ezra 9:2), but Ezra departs somewhat from Shecaniah's resolution. In this sense, there is a parallel between the authorization that the king bestows on Ezra in Ezra 7:12–26 and Ezra's actions and manner of execution of that mandate, apparent because of the shift from the memoir to narration.

The shift from the Ezra Memoir to a different narrator in Ezra 10 invites the reader to look for differences between the two responses. And just as Ezra surprises the reader by what he does and does not do in relation to the king's authorization, so too he surprises in Ezra 10:10–11 and again in 10:16 by what he does and does not do. Ezra makes no mention of sending away wives or children. He refers (as in Ezra 9:1) to the need to separate, but determining what separation entails is delegated to the judgment of local committees of which he is part (10:14–16).

Ezra, who was a decisive leader in Ezra 8, is passive in 10:1–6 (Japhet 2019, 237); he does not initiate actions (as he did in Ezra 7:1–10 when he obtained the king's support and in Ezra 8 when he gathered the people, recruited cult personnel, and commissioned them). Once in Jerusalem, Ezra in Ezra 10 (as in Ezra 9) responds rather than initiates. As Japhet (ibid.) points out, we cannot know whether this characterization faithfully represents the historical Ezra or whether it is the narrator/author who consciously minimizes Ezra's role and magnifies that of the public.

Nevertheless, one can identify specific outcomes from this depiction of Ezra. First, his passivity highlights the contrast with Nehemiah (see Eskenazi 1988a, 127–54; Wright 2005). Second, the contrast between "active" and "passive" serves EN's broader political and societal aims. It seems important to EN to underscore where and how Ezra exercises his virtually unlimited authority. In Judah, Ezra consistently waits for others in the community to take initiative. In Ezra 9:1–2, others inform him of violations (he does not find these out himself, as does Nehemiah in Neh 13:23–27). In Nehemiah 8, Ezra will respond to the people's request to bring the *torah* (Neh 8:1). These patterns model procedures in which Judeans take part in determining their own future, not simply being managed from above by Ezra or imperial authorities. In this manner EN, with this portrait of Ezra, carves out a sphere for Judean "self-determination" under Persian rule.

Ezra 10:1–6, then, is part and parcel of the infrastructure that is gradually constructed in the narrative. Members of the community elect their own leader. Only then does he, namely Ezra, take charge. As Ezra departs from Artaxerxes' mandate, so too will he depart from Shecaniah's.

2. COMMUNAL DECISION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION (10:7–17)

10 [7]And they passed a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem for all the sons of the exile to assemble in Jerusalem. [8]And anyone who does not come within three days, in accordance with the counsel of the chiefs and the elders, all his goods will be banned, and he will be separated from the congregation of the exile.

[9]And all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within three days, it being the ninth month on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people

sat in the plaza of the house of God, shivering because of the matter and from the rains. [10]And Ezra the priest rose up and said to them: "You have committed sacrilege and settled foreign women, to add to Israel's guilt. [11]And now make a confession/give praise to YHWH, the God of your fathers, and do his will; and separate from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women." [12]And the whole congregation responded and said in a loud voice: "Indeed, in accordance with your words we must do. [13]But the people are numerous and it is the season of rains, and there is no strength to stand outside; and the work is not for a day and not for two, for we greatly trespassed in this matter. [14]Let our chiefs stand up for all the congregation, and everyone in our towns who had settled foreign women will come at the appointed time, and with them the elders of each town and its judges until the fierce anger of our God over this matter turns back from us." [15]But only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah stood up over this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

[16]And the sons of the exile did so. And they separated—Ezra the priest, men, paternal heads according to their paternal household—and all of them by name; and they sat on day one of the tenth month to inquire into the matter. [17]And they finished with all the men who had settled foreign women by day one of the first month.

Introduction and Structure

In Ezra 10:7–17 the congregation undertakes steps to resolve the crisis of intermarriage. Leaders summon a "national assembly." At Ezra's urging, the assembled agree to separate from foreign women but propose that a committee address the matter. Their proposed procedure is followed. The result: exogamy is legislated and publicly endorsed.

Several interpreters regard the scene as among the saddest in the Bible (see Washington 2003). The biblical writer seems to share such sympathy, imbuing the scene with pathos by describing the discomfort of the shivering participants. But there is no "mass divorce" in this scene or anything such as "ethnic cleansing" (*pace* Thompson 2001). In the end, four men from the leading priestly family consent to divorce their wives. The fate of the other 109 affected marriages (or 107, depending on emendations and how certain terms are translated) is not recorded (see the Notes below, esp. at Ezra 10:44).

The scene models a new kind of political and social structure. For the first time we witness a duly appointed official, authorized by imperial power to issue orders unilaterally, who resorts to different strategies: empowering the community to determine its own future.

The structure of Ezra 10:7–17 is as follows:

1. The assembly is summoned (10:7–9).
2. Ezra addresses the congregation, identifying the problem and its solution (10:10–11).
3. The people respond (10:12–14).
    a. The people concur with Ezra's assessment of the problem (10:12).
    b. The people propose a procedure for resolving the matter (10:13–14).
4. Conclusion (10:15–17)

Notes

10:7. *And they passed a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem for all the sons of the exile to assemble in Jerusalem.* An assembly is convened to implement the earlier resolution undertaken by the few in response to Ezra (Ezra 10:1–6).

they passed a proclamation. This idiom for convening an assembly or broadcasting a message (presumably by heralds) is common in postexilic texts (see Ezra 1:1; Neh 8:15; 2 Chr 30:5, 36:22). The implied conveners are the chiefs and elders (Ezra 10:8), presumably including those in Ezra 10:5. An analogy to the Athenian Assembly can be discerned (as Wulf [1947] noted). The repetition of this phrase which began EN (Ezra 1:1) highlights the shift from the Persian king to Judean leaders

Judah and Jerusalem. Benjaminites will join the assembly (Ezra 10:9) since Benjamin is now part of Judah.

exile. The term *gôlâ* alternates with "Israel" in Ezra 9–10. Japhet (2019, 240–41) regards the string of designations here and in 10:9 as signs that Ezra and EN do not acknowledge anyone else in Judah as "Israel."

The emphasis on exile supports the view that the conflict in these chapters is the definition of Israel as interpreted by Ezra's community, in tension with other groups, including indigenous Judeans or Israelites (on the impact of exilic identity, see Brett 2019, 75–85; Southwood 2012; and Comments [9:1–15]; on "exile" see at 1:11).

10:8. *And anyone who does not come within three days, in accordance with the counsel of the chiefs and the elders, all his goods will be banned, and he will be separated from the congregation of the exile.* The proclamation demands full participation by anyone who intends to remain a member of the community. Note that the penalty applies to those who refuse to show up for communal deliberation, not to those in disagreement with the decision.

Blenkinsopp (1988, 193) (who recognizes similarities to the Greek Assembly) suggests that the "political purpose of the plenary gathering was to isolate the assimilationists in the community by a kind of plebiscite." Steps are indeed taken to identify the intermarried, but calling them "assimilationists" goes beyond the evidence.

three days. The number is conventional yet realistic. The province is small and the distance makes such a time frame possible.

the counsel of the chiefs and the elders. Most likely, the reader is to suppose that these leaders convened the assembly. Chiefs took an oath in Ezra 10:5 to support Shecaniah's proposal, authorizing Ezra to lead. Priests are not mentioned here (or at Ezra 10:14).

elders. Elders in the Hebrew Bible regularly represent the community. See, for example, Exod 3:16 (Moses's mission to Pharaoh), Lev 4:15 (serving in rituals on behalf of the community), Deut 22:15–20 (negotiating cases of conflict), and Ruth 4:1–12 (serving as witnesses). Elders appear most prominently in Deuteronomy. They were prominent in the Aramaic correspondence (esp. Ezra 6:8–14) and continue to play a role in the resolution of the mixed marriage crisis (10:14; see "the elders" in Notes at Ezra 5:5 and Brett 2019, 1–13).

his goods will be banned. This threat has been important for historical studies of the socioeconomic realities in postexilic Judah. Scholars wonder whether local subjects of the empire could exercise such authority, and if so, under what conditions. Weinberg (1992b) and Hoglund (1992), in particular, connect EN with religious reforms of land

rights based on specific Achaemenid administration practices. Hoglund (ibid., 238–39) claims that the Achaemenid rulers assigned land to dependent populations as corporate entities, not to individual members. Therefore, the Judean community as a whole (via its representatives) exercised control over who could use it. Communal authority explains why the threat was effective. As Hoglund (ibid., 238) notes, "Banishment from the group as a penalty would deny the possibility of regaining access to the rights and privileges enjoyed by the group as a unit." Hoglund's claim that the concern with intermarriage was related to Achaemenid land policies seems unlikely, however, given more recent studies (see, e.g., Jursa 2010).

Weinberg's (1992b) model of "Citizen-Temple Community," in which land rights were transferred to a group, does not reflect the military and political factors that Hoglund supposes. Later rabbinic tradition derives from this verse a ruling that permits the rabbinical court in certain cases to confiscate property (see b. Yebam. 89b and *Moed Katan* 16a; the latter includes Ezra 7:26 as well).

goods. Heb. *rĕkûš* typically refers to movables (see Ezra 1:6). Japhet (2019, 241) highlights Ezra 7:26 as backdrop to such measures, noting that the punishment here applies to property, not individuals.

banned. Heb. from *ḥ.r.m.,* meaning something proscribed; it may not be used and is separated for a special destiny, usually for destruction (e.g., Deut 2:34) but sometimes for God's service or priests (Lev 27:28). The *ḥērem* evokes the conquest of the land (see, e.g., Josh 6:17) and is common in priestly writings and Ezekiel. The NJPS has "confiscated," which implies that the community has authority over such matters, a topic under dispute. Williamson (1985, 154), translating "forfeited," suggests that Artaxerxes' letter empowers Ezra to implement such measures. The context, however, suggests "banned," a boycott, a step with religious and socioeconomic consequences that community leaders can effectuate; it parallels separating or excluding individuals. The meaning of *ḥ.r.m.* as "ban" or "excommunication" continues in Judaism (note the case of Spinoza in the seventeenth century). First Esdras 9:4 specifies that "their livestock will be seized for sacrifice," which does not fit.

he will be separated from the congregation of the exile. The Pentateuch stipulates exclusion in response to certain transgressions. However, the present occasion for such measures is unique. Significantly, the reprehensible action that legitimates exclusion is failure to participate in the assembly, not inappropriate marriage. The narrative thereby underscores the importance of communal participation. Separation from the community is regarded as a serious loss, but within the multiethnic and multicultural Persian Empire, it was not necessarily a barrier to thriving.

congregation. The word designates a duly assembled community, not merely a crowd (see Notes at Ezra 10:1).

10:9. *And all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem within three days, . . . and all the people sat in the plaza of the house of God, shivering because of the matter and from the rains.* The pathos of the scene is vividly rendered, depicting physical and emotional discomfort. Williamson (1985, 155), for whom Nehemiah 8 precedes Ezra 9–10, notes that a return to the scene of earlier festivities intensifies solemnity and apprehension. In the present form of the book, however, this assembly is solemn enough even without the memory of any early celebrations.

The gathering and the process that ensues resemble the Athenian Assembly (*ekklēsia*), which was composed of all male citizens who gathered to discuss, vote on policy, and establish laws (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 25.1–2, 41.2; for more about Athens, see Sealey 1987, 83–90; Blackwell 2003). Fried (2015a, 404), in a section titled "Role of the Assembly in the Ancient Near East and Persia," concludes, "Men were assembled to hear decrees and to witness the decisions of imperial officials. That is all." But Ezra 10 presents a different model, one in which the community plays a major role in deciding its future.

The syntax of the LXX differs slightly: "on the twentieth day all the people sat."

all the men of Judah and Benjamin. The province here is Judah, but the inhabitants include Benjaminites. Since the culprits are men, women are not summoned. Japhet (2019, 240–41), among others, assumes that EN recognizes only the *gôlâ* community in the province. Plausibly, however, "all" indicates that *gôlâ* and non-*gôlâ* members convene.

ninth month on the twentieth day. This month, Kislev (usually December), is the rainy season, some four months since Ezra's arrival (according to the canonical sequence). Calculating the precise date in nonbiblical terms is hampered by controversies about the date of Ezra's mission and its historicity. EN alternates between designating months by name (e.g., Neh 2:1) and by number (e.g., Ezra 3:1); see Notes at Ezra 3:1 for the significance of such alteration.

all the people sat in the plaza of the house of God, shivering because of the matter and from the rains. Few scenes in the Bible capture the mood of a public assembly with such vivid rendering of a difficult occasion. Emotions have already played a role (see Ezra 3:12–13) and will continue to do so. EN represents the reconstructing of Israel's life in the land as a recurrent movement between sorrow and joy.

all the people. The "people" in Ezra 10 often includes women. Although not summoned to Jerusalem, women were not necessarily excluded.

the plaza of the house of God. "Plaza" is a broad area, familiar from various reports about the temple. In Herod's time, plazas accommodated throngs during festivities. The communal gathering in Neh 8:1 also takes place in a plaza, but with no reference to the temple. The Athenian Assembly met at an open space on top of the hill of the Pnyx (Thucydides, *Pelop.* 8.97).

shivering. Whereas "tremble" (in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3) connotes awe, as at Sinai (Exod 19:16), shivering means actual quaking. It results (as the people explain below) from the inclement weather and the gravity of the issues at hand.

because of the matter and from the rains. While Ezra 10 does not record any announcement about the purpose of the assembly, it implies that the issue was known. Ezra 10 uses *dābār* ("matter" or "word") six times to refer to the crisis at hand. First Esdras 9:6 mentions only bad weather as the cause of the shivering.

10:10. *And Ezra the priest rose up and said to them: "You have committed sacrilege and settled foreign women, to add to Israel's guilt."* At last, Ezra issues directives as a leader, four months after his arrival. Ezra's first words echo Shecaniah's proposal, not King Artaxerxes', indicating that Ezra responds to a local, Judean agenda (rather than to a royal mandate).

Ezra the priest. The title underscores Ezra's qualification to determine the nature of sacrilege, as well as to declare the means of "decontamination." First Esdras omits "the priest."

You have committed sacrilege. Sacrilege in the Bible is never defined, but as Milgrom (1991, 320) points out, it suggests "trespass upon the sancta" (see "sacrilege" in NOTES at Ezra 9:2 and also Southwood 2012, 101). This cultic language removes marriage from the category of a private matter between individuals or families. It is instead both communal and cultic, bringing the union between a married couple under the umbrella of the holy. Such status differs from other ANE and Greek interpretations of marriage, leading to traditions in both Judaism and Christianity that regard matrimony as a sanctified union. Yet Judean contracts from fifth-century BCE Elephantine, Egypt, legalize marriages as what we would call "civil unions"; so also marriages elsewhere in the Bible, even when blessings invoke God (e.g., Ruth 4:11–12).

and settled foreign women. Ezra first virtually repeats the charge as Shecaniah formulated it (Ezra 10:2). The language of settling foreigners in Judean households may suggest a general concern with settling the land.

settled. The LXX retains the nuance of the Hebrew with *ekathisate,* "to set" or "to establish" (as in Hannah's prayer, 1 Sam 2:8), but 1 Esd 9:7 has *synōkisate,* the common term for marriage. Most translations obscure the odd language by translating "married" (see "we have settled" in NOTES at Ezra 10:2).

to add to Israel's guilt. The marriages affect the entire community and its relation to God. Guilt from such unions remains Israel's legacy. Ezra explained (Ezra 9:6–15) that living in the land was due to God's graciousness and God's willingness to forebear Israel's transgressions and was not a result of the survivors' merit.

guilt. See NOTES at Ezra 9:6.

10:11. *And now make a confession/give praise to YHWH, the God of your fathers, and do his will; and separate from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women.* For the first time Ezra directly commands the people (he issues only one other command, jointly with Nehemiah; see Neh 8:9–10). He demands a threefold action: an address to God, conformity to God's will, and separation. Nothing is said about either children or the *torah,* nor does he prescribe expulsion. Moreover, no penalty is proposed (and none will be specified).

make a confession/give praise. The noun *tôdâ* usually means thanksgiving (Neh 12:27, Ps 26:7) or refers to a particular sacrificial offering (Lev 7:12, 2 Chr 33:16), but its root often describes confessing (see Ezra 10:1), which fits the context. Therefore, most translations use "make a confession" (KJV, NJPS, NRSV). First Esdras 9:8 uses *homologian,* "confession" or "vow."

YHWH, the God of your fathers. See NOTES at Ezra 7:27. First Esdras and the LXX have "our God."

do his will. Ezra emphatically equates God's will with separating from foreign wives. He offers no basis for his proclamation. As a priest, especially one of such high stature (Ezra 7:1–6), he is an appointed arbiter for interpreting God's teaching and will (see, e.g., "Ask the priests *torah,*" Hag 2:11). But unlike Shecaniah, Ezra does not invoke the *torah.* In fact, he never mentions *torah,* even though EN casts him as the one most qualified to represent it.

separate from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women. This is the core demand. It has two related aspects: separating from the peoples of the land is the goal; separating from foreign women is the means. Ezra uses Shecaniah's language for the transgression (Ezra 10:2) but omits Shecaniah's demand that wives should be sent out

with their children (10:3). On "separate" and its cultic implications, see Notes at Ezra 8:24 and 9:1, as well as Comments (9:1–15).

Ezra's claim (as in Ezra 9:1–15) that exogamy is sacrilege indicates that "separation," whatever else it means, entails endogamy. As noted, biblical sources are inconsistent on the subject of intermarriage (see Yoo 2017, 172–76, for a review of exogamy in the Pentateuch). Deuteronomy 21:10–14 describes procedures through which a (presumably foreign) woman captured during war can become a wife (these do not include ritual conversion). Ezra does not acknowledge such an option.

separate. Israel in the Bible is called to separate from outsiders, although the modes of separation vary, as do the criteria defining "outsiders." Ezra's call thus resolves preexisting ambiguity in the tradition. His role as a priest includes responsibility for separating the sacred from the nonsacred (see, e.g., Lev 10:10). Ezra, then, implements this task by classifying foreign wives as a category from which Israel must separate and the "peoples of the land" as foreign. In so doing Ezra "minds the gap" that has made room for foreign women elsewhere in the Bible (Yoo 2019). But Ezra's demand differs considerably from Shecaniah's position in not specifying expulsion.

Ezra does not explain what separation entails in the present situation. Thus, Ezra (unlike Shecaniah) leaves the interpretation and application open as to whether it entails divorce, annulment, or some other possible arrangement. The people's response confirms that the details require a careful case-by-case assessment (Ezra 10:14–17). Ezra nevertheless establishes a principle that the community soon affirms: separation from the peoples of the land, required for a relationship with God, includes separation from foreign wives.

Such strategic separation is tantamount to erecting social and religious boundaries, promoting communal cohesion in a context where geography and political circumstances challenge solidarity.

the peoples of the land. See Notes at Ezra 10:2. The phrase differs from the "peoples of the lands" in Ezra 9:1 and 9:11. The singular "land" was inhabited by Judeans and Israelites who did not go into exile, including very likely those in Samaria as well (see "Who Are the Objectionable 'Peoples of the Lands'?" at Comments [9:1–15]).

10:12. *And the whole congregation responded and said in a loud voice: "Indeed, in accordance with your words we must do."* The unanimous assent expresses ratification of Ezra's demand by the entire assembly. "Must do" harks back to other scenes when people wholeheartedly commit to doing what is commanded, as at Sinai (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7) or when Joshua assumes leadership (Josh 1:16). However, the present affirmation dramatically differs from others on such occasions by what follows, namely, a resounding "but" at Ezra 10:13 (see below) with a proposal by the people (for a different view, see Fried 2015a, 404). The LXX and 1 Esdras essentially resemble the MT.

congregation. The term emphasizes that this is not just a crowd, but a formally constituted community (see Notes at Ezra 10:1). Their statement is binding, representing the people's voice and choice.

Indeed. Heb. *kēn,* a term for affirmation, as in Num 27:7, where God confirms the words of Zelophehad's daughters. It can be translated as "so" or "thus," as in Gen 1:7. It means "yes" in modern Hebrew.

in accordance with your words. The K is plural, "words"; the Q is singular.

10:13. *But the people are numerous and it is the season of rains, and there is no strength to stand outside.* This resounding "but" both affirms and undercuts Ezra's instructions. It introduces one of the most extraordinary public scenes in the Bible. Suddenly the people speak out with more than standard assent. They take responsibility for proposing the process by which the situation that affects them will be resolved.

The scene accomplishes two important things. First, the people confirm the principle that Ezra advocates, namely, separation from the peoples of the land and foreign women. Second, the people propose a collaborative procedure for implementation, transferring authority in the matter to local bodies as well. The scene echoes the response at Sinai (Exod 20:19), but the people this time take on a new authority.

it is the season of rains. The ninth month (corresponding to December) is cold. Rain and dampness are not conducive for working through serious, challenging matters at an outdoor assembly.

the work is not for a day and not for two. Rhetoric and grand public declarations do not adequately address intimate and legal aspects of life, and haste is inappropriate when so much is at stake for members of the community. EN acknowledges the gravity of the situation. Kochman (in Kochman and Heltzer 1985) concludes that determining who must divorce was difficult, since some knots may have been hard to disentangle. If the account is historical, then one can imagine all sorts of complications. Kochman (ibid., 84) envisions cases where the identity of Israelite or Judean women was not easily established (see, e.g., challenges to identity in Ezra 2:59–60). The *torah* does not spell out a procedure, nor does EN indicate what was to be done in ambiguous cases. No penalty is mentioned in Ezra 10 for those who do not conform. Nehemiah will make violators swear that they will not again marry or allow their sons to marry foreign women; but he says or does nothing about divorce or exclusion, except in the case of the family of the high priest (Neh 13:23–29). In Ezra 10:18–19, the situation of that particular family is likewise handled uniquely. The subsequent lack of interest in details in Ezra 10 highlights the importance that EN grants to the decision itself and to the processes by which it was reached and applied.

10:14. *Let our chiefs stand up for all the congregation, and everyone in our towns who had settled foreign women will come at the appointed time, and with them the elders of each town and its judges.* Implementation is to be adjudicated case by case, entailing adequate representation for interested parties, and delegated to a wider circle in which Ezra will have a role. Local leaders are to partner with families under review. A committee of both local and "national" representatives is to evaluate each case. This is "bottom-up" organizing, since the people propose the procedure.

Placing decisions in the hands of a committee corresponds to Deuteronomy's demand for courts and judges (Deut 16:18, 17:8–11). "In accordance with the *torah* . . . and the *mišpāṭ* that they will tell you, you shall act" (Deut 17:11). See Ezra 10:3, "and according to the *torah* it shall be done." But Deut 17:8–11 includes adjudicating Levitical priests; Ezra 10:14 does not.

Let our chiefs stand up. To "stand up" means to be appointed or take a position. First Esdras 9:12 has "let the leaders of the multitude stay." Fried's (2015a, 400) assumption that Persians are meant is improbable.

settled. Once again, the language for marriage is "settling" (see Notes at Ezra 10:2). First Esdras 9:12 refers to "those who have foreign wives."

the elders of each town and its judges. The social structures of postexilic Judah cannot be reconstructed with clarity, but this verse gives a helpful glimpse of some societal aspects as EN construes them. Local jurisdiction (elders and judges) is retained alongside national leaders (chiefs). The complexity of the procedure supports the conclusion that some of the women would have been Judean and Israelite (see Kochman and Heltzer 1985, 84 [Kochman]; Eskenazi and Judd, 1994; Eskenazi 2006; Hensel 2018). See "elders" in Notes at Ezra 10:8.

judges. Marriage during the Persian period (in Babylonia and in Judean marriage contracts from Elephantine) was an arrangement between families, typically with legal stipulations and specific contractual agreement. Marriage contracts included financial terms, such as a dowry, that needed to be returned should the marriage be terminated (Lemos 2010, 62–88, esp. 87–88). Contracts also included witnesses but not judges. The judges that Ezra 10 stipulates are an innovation. Presumably, they were to be Judean (as Fried 2015a, 400, also concurs).

until the fierce anger of our God over this matter turns. Here, the Hebrew, *lĕhašîb,* "to turn," provides a pun on *lĕhôšîb,* "to settle," or *hahōšîbû,* "who settled," in Ezra 10:14 and 17. But the syntax is awkward when combined here with "until," literally stating "until to turn." First Esdras 9:13 has "until we are freed from the wrath of the Lord over this matter."

10:15. *But only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah stood up over this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.* Although the sentence is clear syntactically, its message is uncertain. The LXX differs slightly (see below). The MT can be interpreted in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, it can signal opposition to the plan since "stood up over" (Heb. *ʿāmĕdû ʿal*) carries adversarial meaning in 1 Chr 21:1 and 2 Chr 20:23. Thus Myers (1965a) translates "opposed to this" (see also Williamson 1985 and Blenkinsopp 1988). If correct, the reason why these individuals opposed the decision is uncertain. Did they oppose the separation or the proposed delay? In either case, if the phrase registers discord, then it illustrates a practice of recording a minority opinion. Including opposition but without censure resembles later rabbinic practice where diverging minority opinions were duly preserved with respect.

Conversely, the phrase could mean "to stand up for the task at hand," that is, to agree to undertake responsibility to lead the commission. In Esth 8:11, it means to stand up for one's life. In 2 Sam 20:11 it refers to standing by someone, which may account for the LXX's addition of "by me." The NJPS takes this position, translating "remained for this purpose." First Esdras 9:14 translates similarly: "undertook the matter on these terms, and Meshullam and Levi and Shabbethai served with them as judges." Rabbinic sources are divided. Pseudo Rashi and Malbim regard this as opposition. *Mezudath David* (eighteenth century) says that these men strongly favored sending the wives away.

Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah . . . and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite. The names do not help identify the issues. Williamson (1985, 156–57) links this Meshullam with the one in Ezra 8:16 (but not with Ezra 10:29) and considers it probable that it refers to a rigorist (rather than lax) group. A Levite named Shabbethai appears in Neh 11:16, and the name, without a patronym, also appears among Ezra's readers in Neh 8:7. However, these names are too common to help yield a definite conclusion (Blenkinsopp 1988, 194).

10:16. *And the sons of the exile did so.* Having lingered on the public assembly and its decision-making process (Ezra 10:1–15), the conclusion (10:16–17) compresses three momentous months (no doubt laden with much drama) into two short verses (10:16–17). These verses confirm that the decision was implemented as planned. This brief summary concludes the detailed account of the steps leading to the decision about the crisis (9:1–10:15). It confirms that the assembly's proposal had been carried out effectively. As a proleptic summary, it introduces the results recorded in 10:18–44.

And they separated—Ezra the priest, men, paternal heads according to their paternal household—and all of them by name; and they sat on day one of the tenth month to inquire into the matter. EN reports laconically that a committee was formed, records the time span of its work, and then turns to the resulting list. Heads of households join Ezra in the work, with no priest among them aside from Ezra. The brevity of this conclusion contrasts sharply with the recorded details of the process leading to it.

And they separated. The Hebrew could mean "they separated themselves" or "were separated," referring to the committee ("sequestered" in the NJPS). The LXX has *diestalēsan,* as in Ezra 8:24. The action, like the decision, is communal, whereas 1 Esd 9:16 credits Ezra with forming the committee. So too does the NRSV. The MT (followed by the LXX), however, consistently links Ezra with other co-workers. Importantly, the passage sheds additional light on the use of "separate" in EN. The verb repeatedly designates dedication to a special task, usually in relation to God. Here, as at 8:24 (in contrast to Ezra 9:1–2), it does not disparage those from whom one separates.

men, paternal heads according to their paternal household. The LXX tidies up the syntax to read "Ezra and the heads." Family heads represented the community from the start, when they rose up to build God's house (Ezra 1:5) and when they contributed handsomely to the project (2:68). There is no mention of priests (aside from Ezra).

all of them by name. EN attests to a duly recorded procedure, establishing that relevant information has been preserved even if not included.

and they sat. The LXX has "returned," apparently reading the *qal* of *š.w.b.* as the verb's root instead of the MT *y.š.b.* First Esdras essentially corresponds to the MT.

day one of the tenth month. First Esdras 9:16 uses "new moon," which also designates the first day. The tenth month, Tebeth (Esth 2:16), corresponds to late December or early January, the heart of the winter season. Blenkinsopp (1988, 195) calculates the date on the basis of Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE, suggesting this means December 29.

to inquire. Heb. *lĕdaryôš.* The term recalls the infinitive *lidrôš* ("to inquire" or "to seek out") but has two extra letters. The LXX has *ekzētēsai,* "to inquire." Most interpreters regard the MT here rightly as reproducing a scribal error. The consonants replicate the name of Darius in Hebrew, a reference that does not make sense in the present context. The root *d.r.š.* in EN means "to seek." In 4:2 and 6:21, it means seeking God; in 7:10 it refers to Ezra's relation to God's *torah;* and in 9:12, which practically quotes Deut 23:7, it refers to the pursuit of well-being. Elsewhere it is most common in Psalms and Chronicles, referring predominantly to seeking God or God's *torah.* But the semantic range includes legal inquiries (see, e.g., Deut 17:4).

10:17. *And they finished with all the men who had settled foreign women by day one of the first month.* The process took three full months. We are not told how many cases were investigated. That it took three months suggests that the issue was complex and

that the status of the women and their future were not self-evident. The likelihood that some women were Judean and Israelite is thereby increased (as many scholars concur, e.g., Kochman in Kochman and Heltzer 1985; Eskenazi 2006; Eskenazi and Judd 1994; Grabbe 1998; Southwood 2012; Hensel 2018).

finished. The commission's role was to identify cases of intermarriage. They completed the assessment. For the outcome, see especially Notes at Ezra 10:18–19 and 10:44, and the Comments below.

day one of the first month. If Ezra arrived in 458 BCE, this could mean March 27, 457 BCE (so Blenkinsopp 1988, 195). If arrival was in 398 BCE, this could mean April 23, 397 BCE (so Fried 2015a, 401).

Comments

The obstacle in Stage Two to rebuilding YHWH's house (Ezra 9) is overcome when the entire community resolves to oppose exogamy, then takes steps to implement its decision. Although this much is clear, other outcomes remain subject to debate.

legislating endogamy

Ezra 10:1–6 reports that a Judean proposed a radical solution to intermarriage, namely, expulsion, and nominated Ezra to take charge. In the assembly that follows, Ezra demands separation from foreign wives and from the peoples of the land. The entire assembly agrees but proposes case-by-case adjudication, and this is done (Ezra 10:7–17). Ezra 10:18–44 names the 113 (MT) or 111 (LXX) intermarried men, specifying that four leading priests consented to divorce their wives (10:18–19).

Various community leaders, not Ezra, initiate the process (Williamson 1985, 160). They approach Ezra in Ezra 9:1–2, appoint Ezra as leader (Ezra 10:1–6), and call for an assembly (10:7). At the assembly, Ezra calls upon the people to reject exogamy. The assembly agrees and ratifies the proposal (10:10–12). The people, then, specify procedures for its implementation (10:13–17). Regardless of whether these events transpired in this way, or not at all, EN's message promotes a new ideology. The account highlights how Judeans manage their own affairs in accordance with Judean traditions while under Persian imperial rule. Ezra's leadership sharply differs from that of any biblical figure, including Moses, enabling the Judean community to participate in forming public policy.

Endogamy was the most widespread norm in antiquity. For many reasons it remains the preferred norm today across the globe, even in the United States (Livingston and Brown, 2017). As Rosenfeld (2008, 3) observes in his sociological study of endogamy in the United States, "sociologists have long recognized that endogamy, or marriage within the group, is a fundamental indicator of group cohesion and solidarity"; endogamous marriages "maximize the chance that the children raised within the marriages will recognize their parents' shared identity, and carry that identity forward into the next generation." Jewish "in-marriage" in America "still serves as a powerful predictor of Jewish engagement and demographic continuity" (Cohen and Wertheimer 2020, 286).

Available sources show that Judah and classical Athens are unique in legislating endogamy during the Persian period. But only Ezra 10 (or Ezra 9–10) describes a community that self-consciously accepts this principle through collective deliberation, initiating a multifaceted judicial process by which to handle the matter.

Several studies explore the striking parallel between the citizenship law of Athens (451 BCE) and the reforms in Judah that Ezra 9–10 describes (Heichelheim 1951; Littman 1995; Eskenazi 2006; Fried 2009, 2015a; Oswald 2012). Athens under Pericles restricted Athenian citizenship to men with both an Athenian father and an Athenian mother (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 26.3; Plutarch, *Per.* 37.3–4). Intermarriage precluded citizenship. This law parallels the decision in Ezra 9–10 to exclude foreign spouses from the community (dated 458 BCE, according to the canonical sequence). As far as we know, legislating a ban on exogamy (not merely promoting endogamy) is unique to these two groups.

What might account for this parallel between Athens and Jerusalem? The reasons for the Athenian ban are uncertain. Ehrenberg (1968) suggests that Pericles aimed to exclude some specific individuals from leadership (including his opponent). The law most likely "was a weapon, or perhaps only a threat of a weapon, in the internal struggle against the oligarch" (ibid., 225–26). A similar concern can be at work in Judah as well (Eskenazi 2006, 509–29).

Plutarch also reports that Pericles' law of citizenship, after some neglect, was implemented again rigorously in order to restrict the number of citizens entitled to benefit from the new bounty of grain that Athens received (*Per.* 37.3–4). Access to resources and privileges may have played a role in Judah as well.

Fried (2015a, 391–97) suggests that the purpose of the law in Athens was to protect public offices and public funds from foreigners, but she concludes that this explanation "cannot be applied to the Judeans, since they did not control either the temple or public funds" (396–97). Fried supposes that the Persians alone controlled such funds. In her view, the Persians were also concerned over marriages with foreigners, and this concern is reflected in Ezra 9, with Persian officials approaching Ezra in Ezra 9:1–2 (ibid., 371–74).

Fried's reconstruction of the circumstances, however, is the opposite of EN's depiction of life in Judah. EN's literary representation is clear: Judeans were creating a specifically Judean infrastructure and a mechanism for governing their community according to Judean traditions, even while under Persian rule. EN claims that Judeans were in charge of their resources (including royal gifts) once in the land. In EN, the temple was under Judean jurisdiction (see, e.g., Ezra 6:6–11). Ezra 7:18 specifies that temple funds were placed at the discretion of Ezra and Jerusalem's Judean cult personnel. Ezra 9–10 exemplifies the participation of the community in its governance, beginning and ending the entire episode with initiatives by Judean stakeholders.

Which version, EN's or Fried's, better reflects the likely situation in Judah? Historical evidence contradicts Fried's claims regarding Persian management of Judah. She relies on Persian control of Egypt's temples. But her examples are offset by counterexamples that demonstrate a lack of Persian investment, especially in smaller institutions and communities. Elephantine, Egypt, is an invaluable example. Funds dedicated to the temple of YHW in Elephantine (*TAD* C 3.15 // Cowley 22) are placed at the hands of the Judean priest Jedaniah. There is no Persian involvement. Marriages, including "intermarriages," are likewise internal, familial matters of no apparent concern to the empire. Rather, all signs point to an absence of imperial micromanagement of small places. Evidence suggests that Judah was not on the empire's radar regarding such matters. It appears that as long as taxes were paid and peace maintained, Judah was left to

its own devices. Ezra 9–10 illustrates how a community chose to handle this form of (benign?) neglect.

My interpretation of Ezra 9–10, therefore, is the opposite of Fried's. In my view, greater responsibility bestowed upon the community (in both Athens and EN) accounts for the concern with intermarriage. In EN, increased participation by community members in Judah's internal governance resulted in stricter criteria as to who may count as member (or a "citizen" in Athens) and thus may access power and resources.

EXOGAMY IN EZRA 9–10

Biblical teachings about religious, national, or ethnic exogamy (marriage outside the group) are inconsistent. Biblical leaders marry foreign wives when outside the land (Joseph and Moses). Judah's kings enter such marriages, presumably to form regional alliances. The Davidic lineage is formed by marriages to the Moabite Ruth and Ammonite Naamah (Rehoboam's mother in 1 Kgs 14:21). Deuteronomy prohibits marriage with Canaanites in the land but permits marriage with Egyptians (Deut 7:1–4 and 23:8–9). In the Bible, only the anointed, officiating high priest must adhere to explicit, all-encompassing endogamy (Lev 21:13–15).

Definitions of what constitutes exogamy or endogamy in most societies are not static. In Ezra 10, the community defines the peoples of the land (presumably including certain Judeans and Israelites in, or from, Samaria) as foreign since they practice abominations. Thus, marriage with them constitutes exogamy.

In Ezra 9–10, communal identity is at stake. EN envisions a community in which all members dedicate themselves to the holy (Ezra 9:2), espousing standards analogous to those elsewhere expected of priests. As Conczorowski (2011, 104) notes, "The narrative of Ezra 9–10 defends a self-definition of the postexilic community that is marked by holiness and purity as well as awareness of the dangers posed by influence from outsiders."

The key term in Ezra's demand, "separate" (Ezra 10:11), is a means for establishing such a community. Ezra's language differs from Shecaniah's call "to send out" foreign women and children and differs as well from the usual terms for divorce in the Bible (see NOTES at Ezra 10:3). Separation establishes a boundary, but what this separation from foreign wives entails remains unstated in Ezra 10:10–11.

There is no basis to concur with Blenkinsopp (1988, 200–201) that an uproar generated by Ezra's activities led to Ezra's recall. Nor is there need to concur with Hoglund (1992, 243–47) that Ezra aimed to establish community boundaries for the sake of Achaemenid administrative policies, or with Berquist (1995, 110), who interprets Ezra's entire mission as implementing a Persian agenda. Examples of exogamy in Elephantine, Egypt, should lay to rest claims of Persian opposition to exogamy. As these indicate, the Persian administration did not interfere in marriage arrangements even when men were under direct Persian command (see, e.g., *TAD* B 2.6 // Cowley 15; *TAD* B 3.3 // Kraeling 2). Persian interest in marriages in Judah, therefore, is highly unlikely.

The ban on exogamy in contemporaneous Athens further removes a need to consider Persian influence at work. The impetus for such a law in Athens may include factors relevant to EN, namely, greater responsibility and privileges of citizens in an increasingly participatory society (*pace* Fried 2009 and 2015a, see "Legislating Endog-

amy" above; for a fuller discussion, see Eskenazi 2006; for classicists' analysis of Athens's law of citizenship, see Osborne 1997 and Roy 1999).

EN brings into view the formation of a new kind of political self-representation for a community under foreign rule. As Batten (1913, 308) notes in connection with Artaxerxes' letter (Ezra 7:12–26), "Ezra is here clothed with all of the power of the Pers. king in the whole of Syria, yet he was unable to affect a single divorce except by a pathetic appeal to the people." What Batten regards as "a pathetic appeal to the people" discloses the far-reaching change that EN enacts, one with significant political, social, and religious consequences. Ezra 7–10 (esp. Ezra 9–10) illustrates, and advocates for, new communal practices and structures of authority while the community is under foreign, imperial rule.

EN focuses on procedures in order to show how the entire community participated in ratifying a law by which they agree to conduct their lives. This new social and political structure in Ezra 7–10 reflects certain aspects of Deuteronomy's envisioned polity. Deuteronomy moves in the direction of a more participatory commonwealth (McBride 1987), even if not as "democratic" as Berman (2008) suggests. Ezra 9–10, and EN as a whole, illustrate how Deuteronomy's polity can operate within an imperial, foreign system. With this, EN exemplifies both accommodation to Persian rule and resistance to it (on accommodation and resistance, see Brett 2016, 91–109; 2019, 75–85; Marbury 2020, 228–37).

3. Results and Conclusion (10:18–44)

10 [18]And it was found among the sons of the priests who had settled foreign women: Of the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah and Eliezer and Jarib, and Gedaliah. [19]And they gave their hand to send out their wives, and, guilty, a ram of the flock for their guilt. [20]Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah. [21]And of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah. [22]And of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

[23]And of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (who is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. [24]And of the singers: Eliashib. And of the gatekeepers: Shallum, and Tellem, and Uri.

[25]And of Israel: Of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah. [26]And of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. [27]And of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. [28]And of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zebbai, Athlai. [29]And of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. [30]And of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. [31]And the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, [32]Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. [33]Of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei. [34]Of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel, [35]Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, [36]Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, [37]Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu, [38]and Bani and Binnui, Shimei, [39]and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah. [40]Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai. [41]Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah. [42]Shallum,

Amariah, Joseph. [43]Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, and Joel, Benaiah. [44]All these had taken up foreign women, and of them were women who established sons.

Introduction and Structure

The community established endogamy as a criterion for membership and defined the process for implementing the decision (Ezra 10:1–17). Ezra 10:18–44 records the outcome of these deliberations by listing the names of the intermarried men: 113 according to the MT (111 if emended or according to the LXX). Some of the names are common in seals and bullae from the monarchic period onward (see Avigad and Sass 1997, for, e.g., forms of Malchijah [pp. 120–21], Mattaniah [pp. 126–27], and Shallum [pp. 154–57]). None of these, however, directly connect with the individuals here.

This section specifies that four men from the leading priestly family consented to send away their wives (Ezra 10:18–19). It says nothing about the fate of the other families (10:20–44) beyond listing the names of intermarried men, noting that some had children (10:44). It appears that for EN the important issues at hand are (1) establishing criteria (namely, endogamy) for communal self-definition, (2) creating a procedure for self-regulation, and (3) ensuring compliance by leading priests.

In contrast to EN, 1 Esd 9:36 claims that all the men in the list expelled their foreign wives and their children. A number of English translations actually replace MT (and LXX) Ezra 10:44 with the conclusion of 1 Esdras (see, e.g., the NRSV). Moreover, most English translations regard Ezra 10:44 as the end of a book, that is, the book of Ezra. But EN, in both the MT and LXX, continues without a break with Neh 1:1. First Esdras also continues but with the reading of the *torah* (// Neh 8) with which 1 Esdras concludes. Josephus also continues with the reading of the *torah* (*Ant.* XI.v.5 // 151–58). In all ancient sources, then, the story of Ezra does not end with Ezra 10:44.

The last verse of Ezra 7–10, Ezra 10:44 is inconclusive, leading to debates about whether there was a "mass divorce" and what the historical and social implications of the report might have been. EN's silence can intimate that a mass divorce followed (so Fried 2015a and most commentators) or that nothing much happened (so Japhet 2019). Dor (2003, 2006) suggests that some form of exclusion followed but without dissolving family bonds.

The structure of Ezra 10:18–44 is as follows:

1. List of the intermarried members of the leading priest's family (10:18–19)
2. List of other intermarried cult personnel (including more priests) (10:20–24)
3. List of intermarried "Israel" (10:25–43)
4. Conclusion (10:44)

Notes

10:18. *And it was found among the sons of the priests who had settled foreign women: Of the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah and Eliezer and Jarib, and Gedaliah.* The list begins with the intermarried members of the leading priest's family (Ezra 10:18–19). It positions the line of Jeshua first and gives it the most attention. The language of settling or establishing foreign women persists here for emphasis. The narrator assures the reader that these four priests explicitly consented to sending away their wives

and making cultic reparations. None of these four appears in the subsequent list of officiating priests in Neh 12:1–26, but some of the names appear elsewhere in other roles.

Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers. EN, unlike Haggai (Hag 1:1) and Zechariah (Zech 3:1), never identifies Jeshua son of Jozadak as "high priest." Jeshua's prominence is nevertheless evident throughout (see Ezra 2–5, the reference to his family at the head of this list, and details in other lists in EN, esp. Neh 12:1–26, in which this priestly line demarcates the era of the restoration). Jeshua was officiating at least until 518 BCE (see Zech 7:1; see "Jeshua" in Notes at Ezra 2:2a). His offspring are listed in Neh 12:10–11. The distinctive status and stature of his family account for the special measures delineated here. In Leviticus, the high priest may marry only "a virgin of his own people" (Lev 21:14).

Maaseiah. This is the first occurrence of a name that also appears for other intermarried men (some of them priests; Ezra 10:21, 22, 30). Other bearers of the name include two priests (Neh 12:41–42), an ancestor of a wall builder (Neh 3:23), a reader of the *torah* with Ezra (Neh 8:4, 7), and others (Neh 10:26; 11:5, 7). The frequency of the name in EN makes further conclusions about this person uncertain. Outside EN and Chronicles, the name appears only in Jeremiah.

Eliezer. This name appears in Ezra's entourage (Ezra 8:16) but not necessarily for the same person. It also belongs to two other men with foreign wives (10:23 and 31).

Jarib. The only other Jarib in EN appears in Ezra's entourage, but not as a priest (Ezra 8:16). Elsewhere it appears only in 1 Chr 4:24.

Gedaliah. This name, which belonged to an important exilic, nonpriestly figure in Jeremiah 40–41, does not appear elsewhere in EN. The *yĕhûd* stamp impression with the name Gedaliah most likely belongs to a sixth-century BCE governor, not this priest (Vanderhooft, Richey, and Lipschits 2019).

10:19. *And they gave their hand to send out their wives, and, guilty, a ram of the flock for their guilt.* Only the above listed four priests specifically agree to send away their foreign wives and to make cultic amends. Clines (1984, 131) plausibly concludes, "Very probably the list derives from a formal document which would have recorded similar details for each family (cf. Num. 7)." But this conclusion is not the only plausible one. EN in Ezra 7–10 may be eager to establish the cultic purity of the leading priestly family and its conformity to proper regulations, given stringent laws for leading priests (see Lev 21:10–15). Therefore, Ezra 10:18–19 specifies their divorce and ritual of expiation. The other men may or may not have done likewise, but their compliance may have been considered either less significant (given less stringent cultic expectations) or not as clearly established. No penalties were attached to refusal to comply.

There is no information in the Bible about what divorce would have entailed in this period. Marriage contracts throughout the ANE and Egypt illustrate that men had the legal right to divorce their wives unilaterally and that the process was simple. Deuteronomy 24:1 allows a man to divorce a wife at will and give her a "document of divorce" but does not specify the terms in such a document.

Persian-period Judean marriage contracts from Elephantine, Egypt, however, permit either spouse to initiate a no-fault divorce orally in the presence of a witnessing community. The terms are specified in the marriage contract. The wife takes whatever she brought with her (see, e.g., *TAD* B 2.5, 2.6, 3.8), while the husband forfeits any gifts he gave to the wife's family. There are next to no signs of ritual formalities or a third

party officiating (see Azzoni 2013). One may suppose some specific stipulations in marriage arrangements of affluent Judean families, but we have insufficient information. Ezra 10 shows no interest in the consequences to the families.

they gave their hand. Giving the hand as a sign of a pledge seems to be an ancient practice (see, e.g., 2 Kgs 10:15).

to send out. Heb. *lĕhôṣî᾽,* as in Ezra 10:3. This term most commonly refers to God taking Israel out of Egypt. But when a person is the subject, and in cultic settings, it refers to placing ritual impurities outside the camp (Lev 14:45). Shecaniah demands such action (see Notes at Ezra 10:3). The term is not used for divorce in the rest of the Bible. The usual language for divorce, that is, "to send away" (*š.l.ḥ.*) as in Deut 24:1 or "to expel" (*g.r.š.*) as in Gen 21:10, does not appear here. Cultic terminology and the absence of divorce language accounts for why Dor (2006) questions whether anything beyond a ritual took place, but Southwood (2012, 89–90) rightly challenges this conclusion.

and guilty, a ram of the flock for their guilt. While awkward in English, the Hebrew syntax is common enough. EN indicates that these four priests consented to both divorce and cult offerings (Williamson 1985, 144 n. 19b). The LXX is cleaner, leaving out "guilty."

guilty. Some (e.g., the NRSV) prefer "guilt offering," repointing the participle to nouns for prescribed guilt or reparation offering (e.g., Lev 5:14–26), that is, as *᾽ăšāmîm,* plural of the *᾽āšām* offering.

guilt. Heb. *᾽ašmâ.* The masculine form of the noun (*᾽āšām*) designates a sacrifice, that is, a "guilt offering" or (more commonly these days) "reparation offering." It applies to unwitting violation (see, e.g., Milgrom 1991, 339–78, for a detailed discussion). According to Leviticus, "When any of you commit a trespass and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord," the restitution is a guilt offering [*᾽āšām*] (Lev 5:15). The nature of the transgression as *᾽ašmâ* sheds light on how EN interprets the marriages: they were not necessarily a willful violation; rather, the language implies lack of knowledge. Therefore (in EN's narration), Ezra, as teacher of *torah,* had to explain that these constituted transgressions (Ezra 9:6–15 and 10:10). The community consequently realizes the gravity of the situation, and these four priests mend their ways.

To Milgrom (1976b, 73) it does not make sense that only priests brought guilt offerings if all the others were also guilty. However, cultic compliance seems most urgent in the case of officiating priests from the leading family, and less so for other offenders. The purity of officiating priests directly affects the entire community and the sancta. The degree to which others adhere to strict standards is less consequential (a modern example: while sanitary standards apply to all, surgeons and nurses in the operating room are subject to stricter standards and controls). Biblical texts present priests as chief authorities and practitioners in relation to the sacred and to standards of purity (see, e.g., in Lev 12–13 or Hag 2:12–13). Leviticus 21:10–15 spells out the strictest marriage laws for "the high priest." Ezra 9–10, therefore, insists that these cultic leaders should reform in accordance with an interpretation of Israel's traditions presented by Ezra (priest and scribe) and ratified by the community as a whole. This presents a unique situation in biblical narratives: the community compels (cult) leaders to follow the law.

10:20. *Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.* The priestly Immer group is listed second, as in Ezra 2:37, where it includes 1,052 members. With only two intermarried men, this group has the smallest number of intermarried priests. The two

names are common in the postexilic period (for Hanani, see Neh 1:2, 7:2, 12:36; 1 Chr 25:4; *TAD* A 4.1.10 // Cowley 21; for Zebadiah, see Ezra 8:8; 1 Chr 8:15, 17; and elsewhere). Both names contain the theophoric element *yah,* albeit truncated in Hanani's case.

10:21. *of Harim: Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah.* The priestly Harim family is third here, fourth in Ezra 2:39, where it includes 1,017 members. On Harim, see Notes at Ezra 2:39. All the individual names in this group appear elsewhere in the postexilic period, including in EN, but for apparently different individuals. Unlike the family head's name, they all contain a theophoric element.

Maaseiah. See Notes at Ezra 10:18.

Elijah. The most famous namesake was the northern prophet in 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2 (ninth century BCE). Several people with such double theophoric names (i.e., both *el* and *yah*) appear in postexilic lists (1 Chr 8:27 and Ezra 10:26). The recurrence of the name in different groups (priests and laypeople) and regions (preexilic Israel and Judah) illustrates the difficulty of drawing conclusions from names.

Shemaiah. This popular postexilic Yahwistic name appears in several lists in EN. Shemaiah the priest in the pledge of Neh 10:9 may be the same person, but in light of the name's popularity, no conclusions can be reached. The name also belongs to an Israelite (Ezra 8:13, 16), a Levite (Neh 11:15), and priests (Neh 12:6, 18, 34, 35, 36, 42, and Chronicles). The Elephantine documents include at least eleven references to at least four different individuals named Shemaiah (see *TAD* A 4.10.3 // Cowley 33; *TAD* B 2.1.17 // Cowley 5; *TAD* B 2.3.31 // Cowley 8; *TAD* C 4.5.6 // Cowley 19). The prophet Shemaiah, an opponent of Nehemiah (Neh 6:10), is not identified as a priest.

Jehiel. A common postexilic name with the theophoric element *el,* appearing several times in EN and Chronicles but unattested in preexilic texts.

Uzziah. A common preexilic and postexilic name (including Judah's king in 2 Kgs 15), but only here in EN.

10:22. *of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.* In Ezra 2:38, where it is listed third, the Pashhur group, with 1,247 members, is the largest among the priests. Here it contributes the largest number of intermarried priests (six). Pashhur appears among priests in the pledge of Neh 10:4 and the priestly pedigree in Neh 11:12 (see "Sons of Pashhur" in Notes at Ezra 2:38).

Elioenai. A common postexilic name (in Ezra 10:27 and Chronicles; see also a variant in Ezra 8:4) but unattested in preexilic texts. A priest with that name attends the procession that celebrates the completion of the walls (Neh 12:41).

Maaseiah. See Notes at Ezra 10:18.

Ishmael. This name with the theophoric element *el* is best known for two earlier controversial figures (Gen 16–21, 2 Kgs 25, and Jer 40–41). It appears only here in EN (but see 1 Chr 8:38, 9:44; 2 Chr 19:11, 23:1).

Nethanel. This common name with the theophoric element *el* (although some manuscript have Nethaniah) is attributed to several preexilic figures in Numbers and Chronicles but is limited in EN to two other priests (see Neh 12:21 and 12:36). The same individual may be intended, but no conclusion can be drawn.

Jozabad. This name recurs for Levites (see below at Ezra 10:23). This may be the only reference to a priest. The theophoric *yah* has been abbreviated from Jehozabad (see 2 Chr 24:26).

Elasah. This name, with the theophoric element *el,* appears elsewhere only in Jer 29:3.

10:23. *of the Levites: Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (who is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.* Ezra 2:40 mentioned only seventy-four Levites, but Ezra recruited more (Ezra 8:15–20). Six Levites are intermarried. All the names but Shimei's have a theophoric element.

Jozabad. A Levite by this name appears also in Ezra 8:33 and Neh 11:16, as well as a reader in Neh 8:7, who could also be a Levite. Conceivably, the same individual is meant throughout (see "Jozabad" in Notes at Ezra 10:22).

Shimei. This common preexilic name appears two more times in EN, only in this list (Ezra 10:33, 38). It refers to preexilic figures in Chronicles.

Kelaiah (who is Kelita). An editorial comment (a gloss, so Clines 1984, 131) specifies an alternate version of the name. Kelaiah appears only here in the entire Hebrew Bible, and Kelita only here, in Neh 8:7 (expounding the *torah* with Ezra), and in Neh 10:11 (signing the pledge). Although the name's meaning is obscure, Kelaiah possesses a Yahwistic element, while Kelita does not. The repetition of Kelita in Nehemiah 8 and 10 affects how the list is interpreted. If the same individual is meant throughout, as seems likely, then (given the canonical order) Kelita's subsequent communal roles imply that he complied with the demand to separate from his foreign wife (see Comments below). This does not follow, however, if Nehemiah preceded Ezra. Japhet (2019, 246) calls attention to a seventh- or sixth-century BCE seal with a similar name.

Pethahiah. In the Bible, this Yahwistic name appears only in EN and once in 1 Chr 24:16. This Levite may be among those leading communal prayer in MT Neh 9:5. The only other reference (Neh 11:24) does not suggest a Levite.

Judah. As Clines (1984, 131) observes, this is the first example of a postexilic practice of using a tribal eponym. It is noteworthy that this name belongs to a Levite, not to a descendent of Judah, undermining conclusions from names about tribal origins.

Eliezer. Outside of EN, the name appears several times in Chronicles and twice elsewhere (in Gen 15:2 and for Moses's son in Exod 18:4). In the Ezra narrative it recurs as a priest's name (Ezra 8:16) and an Israelite (10:31; see also "Eliezer" in Notes at Ezra 8:16). First Esdras has Jonas instead.

10:24. *of the singers.* Ezra 2:41 mentions 128 singers. Only one is intermarried.

Eliashib. Several men named Eliashib, belonging to different families, appear in EN. The name is widely distributed among cult personnel and Israelites. In the Bible, it is unique to EN and Chronicles. Perhaps its meaning ("God will restore/bring back") accounts for its popularity at this time (see "Eliashib" in Notes at Ezra 10:6).

of the gatekeepers: Shallum, and Tellem, and Uri. Ezra 2:42 mentions 139 gatekeepers. In contrast to other names for cult personnel in this list, none of these names is theophoric. A gatekeeper Shallum also appears in Ezra 2:42. The name is common in Chronicles and in preexilic material, as well as in EN (see Notes at Ezra 7:2). Gatekeeper Talmon in Ezra 2:42 may account for Tellem here. The names Tellem and Uri appear in preexilic texts (and Uri also in Chronicles), but only this once in EN.

10:25. *of Israel.* Ten groups represent the people Israel (eleven if one emends Ezra 10:38 in accordance with the LXX). All these groups or household heads appear in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. Since most of the individuals' names that follow are common and

lack identifiable patronyms, they cannot be connected easily with others of the same names. Note the prevalence of theophoric elements in the names.

of Parosh: Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah. All the names of the seven intermarried men, except Mijamin, have a theophoric element. The LXX has Asabia instead of the second MT Malchijah.

Parosh. The Parosh group in Ezra 2:3 (where it also heads the list of Israelites) included 2,172 members. On Parosh, see Notes at Ezra 2:3.

Malchijah. See Notes at Ezra 10:31.

10:26. *of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah.* The Elam contingent in Ezra 2:7 (where it is listed fifth, not second) includes 1,254 members. On Elam, see Notes at Ezra 2:7. Most of the six names here are common. Mattaniah, for example, belongs to three Israelites in this list (Ezra 10:30, 37) and several cult personnel (Neh 11:17, 22; 12:8, 25, 35; 13:13). A different Zechariah is best known as a prophet (see Notes at Ezra 5:1). On Elijah, see Notes at Ezra 10:21. A Jeremoth appears in 10:27 and 29. Abdi appears only here in EN (and in Levite genealogies in 1 Chr 6:29 and 2 Chr 29:12).

Jehiel. Shecaniah, son of Jehiel from Elam, proposes the expulsion of foreign wives and children (Ezra 10:2–3). Conceivably, the same Jehiel is meant in both places. If this Jehiel is Shecaniah's father, then Shecaniah himself could be the son of a foreign woman or, more likely if the accounts are historical, a son of a different wife of Jehiel (which would provide a personal motive for his position).

Elijah. See Notes at Ezra 10:21.

10:27. *of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.* In Ezra 2:8 (as here) Zattu follows Elam, with 945 members. The names of the six intermarried men appear elsewhere in EN, with three in this list: see Notes for Elioenai at Ezra 10:22, for Eliashib at 10:24, and for Mattaniah at 10:26.

10:28. *of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zebbai, Athlai.* Ezra 2:11 mentions 623 members of this group. Of the four intermarried men, the names Jehohanan and Hananiah are common in the postexilic era, including EN. They are also found at Elephantine, Egypt (e.g., *TAD* A 4.7.18 // Cowley 30; *TAD* A 4.1.10 // Cowley 21). See "Jehohanan" in Notes at Ezra 10:6.

10:29. *of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth.* Bani in Ezra 2:10 precedes Bebai and has 642 members. Six men are intermarried. The name Bani, like Harim, is unusual in Ezra 10 for appearing twice as a family name (see Notes at Ezra 10:34). This may account for the different renditions of the name in other versions (e.g., Mani in 1 Esd 9:30), possibly eliminating seeming duplication or reflecting a variant manuscript; the name can be rendered as *b'nei,* "sons."

10:30. *of Pahath-moab: Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.* Ezra 2:6 lists this family fourth among the Israelite families, with 2,812 members. On the name Pahath-moab, see Notes at Ezra 2:6. Most of the eight names here appear elsewhere. Two recall preexilic figures: Bezalel (responsible for the work on the tabernacle in Exod 35–38) and Manasseh (known both as Joseph's son in Gen 41:51, later the major tribe in the kingdom of Israel, and as Judah's wicked king in 2 Kgs 21).

10:31. *of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon.* Harim appears as a priestly and Israelite group both in Ezra 10:21, 31 and in 2:32, 39 // Neh 7:35, 42. The

name appears only in EN and once in 1 Chr 24:8. Ezra 2:32 lists 320 Israelite members. Here eight are intermarried. Malchijah may be the Malchijah, descendant of Harim, who helps build the wall (Neh 3:11). The name, however, is popular in EN, appearing nine times (here and Ezra 10:25; Neh 3:11, 14, 31; 8:4; 10:4; 11:12; 12:42). The name's meaning, "YHWH is king," may account for the popularity, reflecting a resurgence of national and religious sentiments. Note also Shimeon here and Benjamin below (Ezra 10:32), unusual for being tribal eponyms, along with Judah in 10:23, Manasseh in 10:30, and Joseph in 10:42.

10:32. *Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah.* Benjamin is one of five tribal names used as personal ones in Ezra 10:18–44 (see Notes at Ezra 10:31).

10:33. *of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, Shimei.* Ezra 2:19 mentions 223 members of Hashum. Seven are intermarried. On Hashum, see Notes at Ezra 2:19. Mattenai appears in Ezra 10:37 and Neh 12:19. See Notes at Ezra 8:13 for Eliphelet, at 10:23 for Shimei, at 10:27 for Zabad, and at 10:30 for Manasseh. Mattattah and Jeremai appear only here.

10:34. *of Bani: Maadai, Amram, and Uel.* In the MT, the family of Bani is listed twice, here and in Ezra 10:29. Ezra 2:10 lists 642 members of the Bani group. The list of intermarried men is exceptionally long (twenty-seven in the MT). The versions vary greatly in this portion of the list, and many translations follow the LXX by dividing the list into two, with v. 38 revocalized to indicate a new group (see below). Amram recalls the father of Moses (Exod 6:20).

10:35. *Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi.* Benaiah is a common biblical name, but the other two appear only here.

10:36. *Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib.* Priests named Meremoth and Eliashib play an important role in EN as a whole and in attempts to reconstruct the dates of Ezra and Nehemiah (see Notes at Ezra 8:33 and 10:6). Vaniah appears only here in the Bible. The others are common and important in EN (see "Meremoth" in Notes at Ezra 8:33, and "Jehohanan son of Eliashib" at Ezra 10:6).

10:37. *Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.* Several Israelites bear the name Mattaniah and Mattenai in the list. See Notes at Ezra 10:26. Jaasu appears only here in the Bible.

10:38. *and Bani and Binnui, Shimei.* "Bani and Binnui," revocalized and emended, can be read as "the sons of Binnui." The LXX may reflect such a text. It renders "and so did the sons of Banui and the sons of Semei and Selemeia and Nathan and Adaia," thus creating additional groups. First Esdras, which does not include Binnui in this verse, retains the Bani group, with sixteen intermarried men, but introduces a different family, Ezora, with six intermarried men (1 Esd 9:34). Williamson (1985, 141–42) selectively adopts the LXX and 1 Esdras to yield twelve families.

10:39. *and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah.* All three names appear elsewhere in EN in different lineages. Shelemiah appears twice in this list (see Ezra 10:41); Nathan is a priest in Ezra 8:16 but elsewhere is famous as a prophet (2 Sam and Chronicles, e.g., 2 Chr 29:25). Adaiah appears twice in this list (see 10:29).

10:40. *Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai.* These three names are unique to this list. Machnadebai is clearly a non-Judean name.

10:41. *Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah.* These three names, each with a theophoric element, are common in EN and Chronicles, with no additional information.

10:42. *Shallum, Amariah, Joseph.* The first two names are common in postexilic lists. Joseph is otherwise known only as Jacob's favorite son in Genesis and subsequently as a general term for the kingdom of Israel, composed of Ephraim and Manasseh (Amos 6:6).

10:43. *of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, and Joel, Benaiah.* Ezra 2:29 lists fifty-two members from this family or location, rendering the seven intermarried men a proportionately large group. On Nebo, see NOTES at Ezra 2:29. Jeiel appears only here and (frequently) in Chronicles. A Mattithiah stands with Ezra in Neh 8:4; Zabad appears also in Ezra 10:33. A Joel is an overseer in Neh 11:9. A Benaiah appears in Ezra 10:25, 30, and 35. Zebina and Jaddai appear in the Bible only here. The other names are common in Chronicles.

10:44. *All these had taken up foreign women, and of them were women who established sons.* This verse concludes Ezra 7–10. In modern Christian Bibles it marks the end of the book of Ezra. In the MT, the book continues with Neh 1:1. In 1 Esdras 9 it is followed by the reading of the *torah* (// Neh 8:1–13a). The end of the verse is awkward. The Hebrew *wĕyēš mēhem nāšîm wayyāśîmû bānîm* literally says "and there are of them [masculine] women and they put/established/made/placed sons." The last verb is third-person plural masculine, a form that can also be used for feminine subjects. The LXX is clearer yet faithful to the MT: "All these had taken foreign wives and had begotten of them sons."

Although the syntax of the Hebrew is awkward, it is not impossible. The KJV translates as, "All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children." Similarly, the NJPS has, "All these had married foreign women, among whom were some women who had borne children." See also Williamson (1985, 143), "And some of the women had even borne children," and Japhet (2013, 205), "All these had married foreign women, among whom were some women who had borne children." We learn that some intermarried couples in Ezra 10:20–43 had children, but EN says nothing further about them.

First Esdras 9:36, however, states, "All these had married [*synōkisan*] foreign women and they put them away [*apelysan*] together with their children [*teknois*]." The NRSV and other interpreters (e.g., Blenkinsopp 1988) replace MT Ezra 10:44 with 1 Esd 9:36. The NRSV adds a note claiming that the "Heb. is uncertain" and that 1 Esd 9:36 "makes good sense." Blenkinsopp (1988, 196–97), regarding the MT as "corrupt beyond repair," translates it as "All these had married foreign women; so they sent them away, women and children alike." Batten (1913, 350), concluding that "a pretty radical emendation is necessary," emends it as "all these put away foreign wives, and some of them had children, and they restored the children [to their mother]."

Although translations struggle with this verse, the only difficult word in the sentence is *wayyāśîmû,* translated here as "who established" (literally "and they," rather than "who"). The puzzle is not its translation but rather its meaning in this context. This verb, *ś.y.m.,* has a wide semantic range but never means "sending away." In fact, it usually means the opposite: "to place, establish, or set" (see at "established" below). EN's silence about the subsequent fate of the families in Ezra 10:20–44 invites conjectures, and the present verb adds to the speculations.

Japhet (2013, 205) effectively reviews three interpretive options at this juncture: she observes that one can view MT Ezra 10:44 "from a textual perspective as a textual

corruption, from a literary perspective as a result of the omission of the final passage that held information about the actual conclusion of the affair, and from a historical perspective as indicating that no further action was undertaken and the affair was concluded by the promulgation of the list." She accepts the last explanation because she deems it unrealistic to conclude that it was possible to carry out such reforms or divorces. Japhet (2019, 246–47) also shows why arguments that consider 1 Esd 9:36 as the earlier Hebrew form of the verse (e.g., Rudolph 1949, 100) are improbable and circular.

One must ask: Does EN aim to intimate that the wives and children of those listed in Ezra 10:20–44 were sent away? Fried (2015a, 413–14) considers it likely that a "mass divorce" ensued, as do most interpreters. This conclusion is plausible; EN may expect readers to infer that the rest of the men did what the priests of the house of Jeshua are said to have done. But since Ezra 10 specifies that the priests consented to send away their wives, yet says nothing about the other men, this conclusion remains hypothetical. The silence in the text requires an explanation, especially since Neh 13:23–25 illustrates that intermarried couples continued to be part of the community, even if chastised.

It therefore seems best to acknowledge that we do not have information as to what subsequently happened with these families (Japhet 2019, 246–48) or what EN claims about them. Possibly Ezra 10 is silent about these families because something else matters more to the writer: (1) establishing endogamy as a norm (hence the attention to the procedure), (2) forcing certain priests to comply, or (3) identifying the intermarried men. Perhaps the conclusion is deliberately vague because the writer knows that while some men divorced their wives, others did not (see the Comments below).

established. The LXX has *egennēsan,* "engendered" or "bore" (children). The common Hebrew verb, *ś.y.m.* (in the *qal* form), appears more than five hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, usually referring literally "to place" or "to put," as when Abraham places his son on the altar (Gen 22:6). It is translated sometimes as "to make" (e.g., 1 Chr 26:10 NRSV) but often means "to establish," that is, to secure a place, especially with regard to progeny, as when the angel promises to establish Hagar's son: "as a great nation I will establish [*ś.y.m.* in the *qal*] him" (Gen 21:18); see also Gen 13:16 and 21:13, where it refers to securing Abram's/Abraham's progeny; and Gen 32:13, with Jacob. In most places the verb is followed by the preposition *ʾēt* (not in Ezra 10:44). But it also appears, as here, without the subsequent preposition in Deut 10:22, "And now YHWH your God establishes [*ś.y.m.* in the *qal,* as here] you like the stars in the Heavens," or when God refers to the place where God will establish God's name (Deut 12:21 and 14:24).

Forms of *ś.y.m.* appear nineteen times in EN, fifteen of them in the Aramaic section where it refers to issuing an order (Ezra 4:19, 21; 5:3, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17; 6:1, 3, 8, 11, 12; 7:13, 21). In Ezra 8:17, Ezra uses the verb for placing words in the mouth of his messengers; in Neh 8:8, it describes interpreters establishing the meanings of the readings; in Neh 9:7 it affirms that God had established Abram's name as Abraham. In short, the verb in Ezra 10:44, as in other verses, suggests placing or establishing something, namely, sons. "Borne" (so the NJPS and Japhet 2015) is more specific than the Hebrew but fits the context.

Torrey (1910, 274) suggests that the original verb was not *ś.y.m.* but *š.w.b.,* "to return." He translates the conclusion as "and they sent them back (to their people), both wives and children" (see also Batten 1913, 350).

Despite the predilection of modern English translators to alter or replace this text, it seems best to retain the MT, especially since the LXX supports it. The fact that Nehemiah, zealous though he is, accepts intermarried unions as faits accomplis (Neh 13:23–27), except in the case of the high priest's family (Neh 13:28), indicates that intermarriage was tolerated at least during his time (Nehemiah insists only that no future intermarriages occur). In both cases (Ezra's and Nehemiah's), communal boundary is being defined. Ezra 9–10 establishes the norm. Future generations are to avoid marriage with foreigners, including the peoples of the land(s), if they are to remain members of the community. Plausibly, divorce did ensue for some or all. Plausibly, some families in Ezra 10, as in Neh 13:23–29, remained unchanged, and the writer does not wish to highlight that, preferring to highlight unity. Ezra 10:44, however, is silent about the final outcome of the decision to separate, beyond identifying the intermarried.

For EN, Ezra 10:44 concludes Stage Two of the reconstruction yet does not constitute an end. It is a stopping point analogous to the partial completions in Stage One (see Ezra 6:14). Stage Three is to follow (Neh 1–7). When all three stages are complete, the community will finally celebrate its success (Neh 8–12). The pledge (Neh 10) will hark back to decisions in Ezra 9–10, formally reaffirming commitments undertaken in Ezra 9–10 (see, e.g., Neh 10:31 [NRSV 30]).

Comments

Ezra 10 concludes Stage Two of Judean reconstruction: rebuilding the community according to Judean traditions. This chapter in the book of Ezra illustrates how the obstacle to building God's house (marriages with the "peoples of the land[s]" introduced in Ezra 9) was overcome. The entire community resolves to legislate endogamy and then takes steps to implement its decision.

While this much is clear, other outcomes remain subject to debate. Ezra 10:18–19 reports that four men from a leading priestly family agreed to send their foreign wives away and make amends; Ezra 10 then lists the names of the other intermarried men. It does not mention what steps, if any, were taken regarding these latter unions (10:20–43). The final verse in Ezra 10:44 only states that some of these men and their foreign wives had sons. Ezra 7–10 ends with this ambiguous datum, the meaning of which remains subject to debate.

First Esdras 9:36 differs substantially from Ezra 10:44, reporting that the foreign women and children were sent away. Some translations replace Ezra 10:44 with 1 Esd 9:36 (e.g., the NRSV), thereby changing the story dramatically. Many interpreters follow 1 Esd 9:36, implicitly or explicitly, or emend the text (see Notes at Ezra 10:44), concluding that the foreign wives and children of some 113 men were expelled. Importantly, the LXX corresponds to the MT in not reporting an expulsion.

The ambiguous formulation of Ezra 10:44 can indicate that not much transpired (so Japhet 2019) or (as most scholars assume) that EN implies that a "mass divorce" followed (e.g., Fried 2015a). But the fact that Ezra 10 (in the MT and LXX) does not specify what happened to the rest of the intermarried families may indicate that for EN, what mattered was that endogamy was legislated and that the leading priestly families did comply. Josephus expresses a similar view when he concludes that "Ezra purified the practice relating to the matter so that it remained fixed for the future" (*Ant.* XI.v.4/ XI.153). Success meant establishing communal norms in the face of inconsistent

traditions and claims. This can explain why the narrative lingers on the decision and the steps leading to it (see "The Outcome" below).

An Overview

Like Ezra 8:1–14, the list begins with cult personnel, followed by Israelite families. The list includes all four priestly families, followed by Levites, singers, and gatekeepers (Ezra 10:18–24), then by ten Israelite families (10:25–43). The total number of intermarried men is 113 (MT) or 111 (LXX and some emendations), 34 of them cult personnel.

The families' names correspond to those in Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, appearing often in the same sequence (four of them appear in Ezra 8:1–14). The variants in the LXX do not add information. In contrast to the family names, most of the names of the intermarried men include theophoric elements, such as *'el* and, more often, *yah.* The preservation (or resurgence) of Yahwistic names is an important yet inconclusive identity marker (see 2:59–60).

Absence of Netinim suggests that they may have been reckoned as foreign (thus not subject to this ruling). But perhaps they did not intermarry, or their inclusion elsewhere is a later addition.

Most scholars regard the list as an independent source, possibly a source for Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7. Williamson (1985, 145–49) suggests likely editorial activity. There is no consensus regarding the list's origin or reliability. The LXX and 1 Esdras list eleven families (dividing MT Ezra 10:34–42 into two families). The parallel list in 1 Esd 9:21–35 is shorter (ninety-eight men). Individuals' names vary considerably but add no new information (for a comparison of the lists, see Myers 1974, 101–4). The major and consequential difference between Ezra 10 and 1 Esdras 9 is, as noted, 1 Esd 9:36, which, unlike Ezra 10:44, reports that the women and children were sent away. Josephus acknowledges the list but omits it (*Ant.* XI.v.4 // 151–52), reporting like 1 Esdras that foreign wives and children were sent away.

As all interpreters note, the final verse of this section (Ezra 10:44) is inconclusive (but see Notes at Ezra 10:44). Stage Two of reconstruction (Ezra 7–10) ends by setting up boundaries for the community. But EN's narrative continues (both in the MT and LXX) with Stage Three and the building of Jerusalem's wall. First Esdras, in contrast, continues with the public reading of the *torah* (1 Esd 9:37–55 // Neh 8:1–13a; see Eskenazi 1986 for the resulting narrative arc). Josephus also continues with the reading of the *torah* as in Nehemiah 8 (*Ant.* XI.v.v // XI.154) All these earliest traditions illustrate that the final goal has not yet been reached. Torrey (e.g., 1910, 255–62), who pioneered placing Nehemiah 8 before Ezra 9, appends Nehemiah 9 to Ezra 10.

The Outcome

Although no extrabiblical evidence exists, most interpreters (including those who deny Ezra's historicity) treat Ezra 9–10 as essentially historical, even if tendentious. As Japhet (2019) rightly notes, we cannot know how the matter in Ezra 10 concluded. The final verse is inconclusive. Its final words are literally, "All these had taken up foreign women, and of them were women who established sons" (Ezra 10:44; see Notes there for a detailed analysis and alternate translations). Japhet (ibid., 247–48) surmises that the decision to expel the women was politically and socially significant but proved unrealistic and impossible to implement. She further hypothesizes that many of the intermarried

belonged to the social and religious elite. Expulsion would not have been tolerated by their families or the Persian authorities.

Dor (2006) also concludes that the list in Ezra 10 had social significance only and lacked practical consequences. But Dor suggests that a ritual "taking out," as symbolic separation from foreign wives, did occur. At the end of it, however, the families returned home intact. The language of *lĕhôṣî'*, "to take out," in Ezra 10:3 and 19 can indeed indicate ritual removal of polluting elements (see Lev 16:27). But, as Southwood (2012, 89–90) rightly observes (*pace* Dor), the term never functions only symbolically, without actual removal.

Most scholars, however, follow 1 Esd 9:36, implicitly or explicitly (e.g., Williamson 1985; Southwood 2012; Fried 2015a; Becking 2018). Williamson (1985, 159) discerns in Ezra 10 "an indication that the narrator was not insensitive to the personal tragedies he was recording." Van Wijk-Bos (1998), while sympathetic to the challenges of reconstructing fragile communal life after exile, nevertheless condemns the damage "to possibly 400–500 people, 111 women and their children, banished from the community (Ezra 10:18–44). Many of them, especially those who had no family to return to, would perish because they lacked the necessary means to sustain their existence" (ibid., 47). At the same time, van Wijk-Bos also criticizes "wholesale condemnation of the episode" (ibid.), especially by Christians, given the history of persecution in which texts like this one were used as justification.

Anderson (2009) also urges taking seriously the social and historical contexts of both the biblical text and the reading communities. Attentive to how readings of Ezra 9–10 have been used against African Americans (and others), especially against women, she concludes that "the intermarriage ban in Ezra-Nehemiah should be used as a 'cautionary tale'" (ibid., 47). It ought to generate "hermeneutical resistance" (60).

Fried (2015a) claims that all divorces, including those with non-Judeans, would have required giving each woman what was due to her according to her written marriage contract. Fried relies on the Elephantine papyri to document the practice (*TAD* B 2.5, 2.6, 3.8). She is confident that "if there was a marriage, then there is a marriage document, a *ketubah,* and so a divorce settlement" (ibid., 405). Moreover, "If the divorce was done according to the law (so Shecaniah requires), then the woman received her dowry and she returned with her children and her dowry to her father's house, her children adopted into her father's family" (ibid.). But Fried's list of expectations does not appear in the Pentateuch, and EN does not discuss this part of the procedure. Lack of information about marriage practices in Judah further makes Fried's hypothesis about a *ketubah* highly conjectural. The use of written marriage contracts in largely rural Judah during the Persian period is likely to have been limited. Moreover, evidence from Persian-period Babylonia shows that written marriage contracts were not common even in Babylonian marriages (Roth 1989).

These diametrically opposed conclusions (and the others that could be added) highlight the lamentable fact that we know too little to be able to draw reliable conclusions regarding the fate of the families in Ezra 10. Some information can be culled from the names, albeit only tentatively. References to the intermarried Levite Kelita (Ezra 10:23; Neh 8:7, 10:11 [NRSV 10]) indicate that he remained in good standing (see Notes at Ezra 10:23). Kelita's prominence in Nehemiah 8 and 10 implies that he complied earlier with the decision to separate. This may apply as well to two others

who also reappear later in important roles: a Levite Pethahiah (Ezra 10:23 and Neh 9:5) and Malchijah (Ezra 10:31 and Neh 3:11). The two names are common, but Malchijah's identity as son of Harim suggests the same individual here and in Neh 3:11. This implies that, in the current canonical version, at least some men had separated from their foreign wives (this conclusion does not follow if Ezra originally came after Nehemiah).

I suggest that the most likely conclusion implicit in what Ezra 9–10 depicts (and leaves unsaid) is that some men agreed to divorce their foreign wives, and others, possibly because of children, did not. This inconclusive result may best account for the silence at the end.

Ezra 10:18–19, however, is explicit about the leading priestly family. Leviticus 21:10–15 specifically proscribes intermarriage for high priests. This tradition may account for the significant, immediate compliance by the leading priests. Given that these priests from the family of Jeshua (the high priest according to Hag 1:1 and Zech 3:1) are in charge of the most sacred, their actions and status affect the entire community in its relation to God. That they indeed comply also represents a triumph in which a community, through process, is able to pressure leaders to abide by established standards.

The references to marriage with the verb *y.š.b.* deserve attention. The verb in the *hiphil* consistently means "to settle" throughout the Bible. Only Ezra 10 and Neh 13:23–27 use it, and often, to designate marriage (e.g., Ezra 10:2, 10, 14, 17, 18). Japhet (2007, 151; 2019, 237–38) concludes that the verb demotes the legal status of the unions, thereby paving the way to a less complicated dissolution of the unions via annulment. Fried (2015a, 392, citing Dor 2006, 20) likewise concludes that the term implies that no legitimate marriages have taken place but that the people involved "were only 'living together.'" I propose, however, that the term "settled" aims to intensify the danger of the unions. It alludes to dispossessing Israel by settling foreigners on the land (see Eskenazi 2006). These different conclusions are not mutually exclusive (for fuller details and for more scholarly views on intermarriage in Ezra 9–10, see Comments [9:1–15]).

Conclusion

Having established endogamy as the approved norm, Stage Two of Judah's reconstruction (Ezra 7–10) ends without an obvious conclusion. As such, Ezra 10 (or Ezra 7–10) does not constitute an end but rather one major step in the process of building YHWH's house (see also Notes at Ezra 6:14). Having rebuilt the temple (Stage One; Ezra 3–6), the reconstituted people (Stage Two; Ezra 7–10) are ready for Stage Three, the restoration of Jerusalem's wall (Neh 1–7). YHWH's house will then be reestablished according to God's command and Cyrus's decree. The repetition of the list of builders from Ezra 2 in Neh 7:6–72 [ET 73] forges symbolic unity of all these three stages. Nehemiah 12:1–26 also expresses this unity by retracing the era from Zerubbabel to Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah 8–12 records how Israel celebrated the completion of YHWH's house.

EN takes great care to show how the community in Judah reached a decision and what that decision was. It establishes a law (endogamy), even if its immediate application remains uncertain: marriage with peoples of the land(s) is sacrilege. For EN, legislating endogamy is significant. It resolves ambiguities in traditions and conventions and establishes that belonging to Israel entails a commitment to shared norms (not just biology or history). Nehemiah 10 spells out these norms, centering on the *torah.* Deci-

sions and implementation begin with the community, not with Persian authorities or even with Ezra. Ezra's role is consonant with his aim to teach Israel (Ezra 7:10). His use of persuasion rather than authorized (imperial) coercion (7:26) is key to the process.

EN's narrative models a significant religious, social, and political transformation, regardless of its historicity. The long-term influence of this depiction can be witnessed in subsequent Jewish life. The later, semiautonomous rabbinic courts in Babylonia under Sassanian rule exemplify structures of Jewish self-governance. Rabbinic traditions link their institutions with "the men of the great assembly" (e.g., m. Pirkei Avot 1.1) whose work they associate with EN.

Some modern developments can also shed light on Ezra 9–10 and on its legacy. Mittleman's (1996) analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orthodox communities in Western Europe is a case in point. These communities, like that of EN, lived under foreign rule. Rich documentation, however, makes possible a detailed examination of their collective Jewish existence during that period. Analyzing such documents, Mittleman (ibid., 95) writes, "Orthodox organizations portrayed themselves as a reemergence of age-old institutions and archetypal traditions that had been nearly lost by emancipation." Their writings display a yearning for what Mittleman (1996, 50) describes as "the sacred polity." The goal, however, was not to form a sect, but "a new historical form of *klal* ["collective"] *Israel,* the entire people of Israel" (ibid., xi). Mittleman adds, "Out of this mix of impulses they created what they thought was the Torah made flesh on the stage of history: a renewed Jewish polity under the rule of God" (ibid.). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch subsumed the political dimension of communal life to the sovereignty of the *torah.* According to Mittleman (ibid., 86), Hirsch "understands Israel and its public institutions to be a product of decision and choice. The people band together and form authoritative institutions in order to better fulfill the Torah (which they freely accepted)."

Similar political and religious aspirations come into view in Ezra 9–10, and EN as a whole. They lead (in EN's final form) to a community organized around the *torah,* supporting the institution it had built, the temple (Neh 8–10). Whatever the actual circumstances of Persian-period Judah (and whether or not the account is factual), EN claims that the goal of a renewed polity under the rule of God was achieved, even when the community was under foreign rule. Ezra 9–10 models a Judean procedure by which legal rulings are adjudicated and applied, establishing standards for membership determined by Judeans according to Judean traditions. This, for EN, constitutes Stage Two (Ezra 7–10) in the story of the people of God, commissioned to rebuild YHWH's house in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–4).

This page intentionally left blank

Index of Subjects

Aaron (the head priest), 133, 163, 165, 182, 245, 284, 285, 286, 292, 318, 324, 331, 347
abominations: of the Canaanites, 356–57; of desolation, 364; in marriage practices, 114, 115, 201, 354, 356, 360, 362, 363, 371, 372, 373, 375, 376–83, 393, 412; meaning of, 382; in religious practices (idolatry), 356, 357, 372, 378, 382
Abraham (biblical), 26, 160, 315, 357, 367, 376, 383, 422
Achaemenid Empire. *See* Persian Empire
Achaemenid family, 9, 128, 403
Across-the-River, 15, 109–12, 114, 148, 153, 181, 220, 226–29, 233–35, 244, 248, 250, 255, 258, 264, 265, 269, 297, 303–6, 345, 350
Adonikam, 157, 322, 323
Ahasuerus/Xerxes (King), 12, 32, 221–23. *See also* Xerxes
Ahava river, 326, 334, 345
Ahikar, 287
Ai, men of, 160–61
Alexander of Macedon ("the Great"), 9, 13, 37
altar(s): fire on, 261; at Gibeon, 158; meanings of, 204–5; offerings upon, 297, 302, 422; officiating at, 182–83, 286; purification of, 273; rebuilding/restoration of, 4, 107, 112, 150, 164, 195–204, 207, 247
Al Yahudu, 19, 23, 43, 125, 148, 157, 178, 324, 325, 326
Amariah, 154, 421
Ammon, 21, 357; governor of, 171
Ammonites, 357–358
Amorites, 358
Amram, 420
Apocalypse of Ezra, 39
Arabs, 13, 21
Aramaic language, 4, 7, 38, 128, 224–25, 237–43; Biblical, 7–8; Late, 7
Arsames, 14, 236, 268, 298, 350
Artaxerxes I (King), 4, 6, 12, 13, 213, 220, 223, 229, 238, 270–71, 285, 288–89; authenticity of letter, 308–10; in Ezra, 108–9, 111, 112–13; letter of, 296–313, 350; purposes of letter, 312–13
Artaxerxes II (King), 6, 13
Artaxerxes III (King), 13
Asaph, sons of, 168–70, 209–10
Ashurbanipal (king of Assyria), 228
Assyria, 21, 216, 280
Athenian citizenship law, 317, 411
Athens/Athenian Empire, 12, 410–11
Azariah, 190, 286

Babylon/Babylonia, 9, 142, 287, 302, 326; conquest of, 3, 9, 127; destruction of the temple by, 37; Judeans in, 23–24; temple in, 253
Babylonian exile, 23–24, 43, 138, 386
Babylonians, 15, 23, 43, 108, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135, 139, 145, 160, 220, 227, 232, 251, 252, 253
Bagohi, 18, 22, 153, 268
Bagoses, 295
Bani/Binnui, 156, 190, 420; sons of, 419, 420. *See also* Binnui
Baruch, son of Neriah, 38
Barzillai: the Gileadite, 179; sons of, 179
Bebai, 156, 322, 323, 324; sons of, 419
Belshazzar (King), 144
Belshunu, 223
Benaiah, 419, 420, 421
Benjamin, 20, 105, 108, 132, 133, 135, 136, 189, 193–94, 403–4; adversaries of, 215; sons of, 420
Bethel, 130, 135, 160–61, 193, 204; men of, 106, 154, 160
Bethlehem, sons of, 158
Bezalel, 419
Bible: Greek, 35; Hebrew, 37, 42–43, 255; Koren Jerusalem, 211; NJPS, 211; Slavonic, 35, 37; Syriac, 200, 289; Vulgate, 7, 33, 35, 37, 235, 289. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
Bigvai, 153–54, 157, 189–90, 192, 324; sons of, 323
Bilshan, 153
Binnui, 347, 419, 420. *See also* Bani/Binnui
Bishlam, 222–23
Bunni, 347

Cambyses (King), 36, 124
Cambyses II (King), 12
Canaanites, 356–357
Casiphia, 329, 331, 332
cedar trees from Lebanon, 203–4
Chaldeans, 253
Cherub, 177
consecrated seed, 359–61, 379–82. *See also* "holy seed"
Ctesias, 9
cultural memory, 8
cymbals, 210, 212
Cyrus II (the Great, King), 3, 4, 9, 12, 13, 34, 105, 107, 108, 110–11, 123, 139, 145, 253; decree of, 5, 105, 121–29, 131–32, 134, 136–37, 146, 184, 186, 188, 197, 202, 204, 207, 217–18, 235, 237, 249, 258, 261–63, 265, 267–68, 270, 290, 292, 301–3, 308, 313, 338, 348, 350, 426; memorandum of, 110, 124, 128–30, 243, 251, 258–63, 265, 267–69, 301; support for building of temple, 36, 122, 127, 128, 267–69

Daniel (son of Ithamar), 317–18, 324
darics, 186–87, 340
Darius I (King), 4, 14, 123, 143, 186, 213, 218, 220, 256, 270–71, 299, 302, 308, 339; in Ezra, 108–11; letter of, 269; support for building of temple, 12, 110–11, 151, 258–67
Darius II (King), 13, 271
Darius III (King), 9, 13
David (King), 33, 108, 113, 124, 145, 159, 160, 170, 171, 172, 179, 235, 286, 318, 326, 330, 331, 332, 337, 338, 339, 357, 358, 376; city of, 17, 168; descendants of, 317–19; house of, 36, 43, 133, 140, 157, 321; as musician, 169, 185, 200, 207, 210–11, 212
Deism, 34
Delaiah, 21, 22, 177–78, 261, 383
divorce, 151, 312, 359, 386, 394, 396, 399, 401, 406–7, 410, 412, 413, 415–16, 422–23, 425–26. *See also* marriage
Documentary Hypothesis, 41

Ebla, kingdom of, 3
Ecbatana, 260
Edomites, 359
Egypt: documents from, 239, 261; Elephantine, 9, 14, 18, 223, 225, 230, 329, 359, 405, 411, 412, 415, 419; exodus from, 34, 137, 276, 277, 279, 280, 281, 292, 342, 345, 346, 394, 416; Judeans in, 19, 22–23, 124, 125, 130, 158, 189, 329, 377; and the Persian Empire, 9, 12–13, 21, 181, 228, 230, 233, 256, 285,

289, 293, 311, 312, 350; Persian wars with, 13, 241, 384; religion in, 204, 263, 366, 382; slavery in, 276, 277, 370; temples in, 14–15, 22–23, 130, 294, 411; Udjahorresnet's mission to, 14, 306, 310
Egyptians, 14, 114, 131, 200, 217, 241, 268, 276, 294, 302, 354, 358
Elam, 156; sons of, 161, 189, 320, 323, 392, 419
Elamites, 108, 156, 220, 227
Eleazar, 286, 347, 419
Eliashib, 419; as high priest, 30, 198, 397–98; sons of, 397–98, 418, 420
Eliezer, 328, 414–15, 418, 419–20
Elijah, 417, 419
Elnathan, 18, 321, 328
endogamy, 385, 387, 406, 414, 422, 423, 426; in Ezra, 412–13; legislation of, 410–12. *See also* marriage
Erechites, 227
Esarhaddon (king of Assyria), 216
Esther (biblical), 37, 222. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
exile. *See* Babylonian exile
exogamy, 4, 35, 42, 114–17, 283, 364, 385; in Ezra *9–10*, 410–12; Ezra's response to, 362–90; as obstacle, 353–90; prohibition of, 390–427. *See also* marriage
Ezra (scribe/priest), 4, 5, 6, 13, 15, 29–32, 37, 42; companions of, 113, 316–25; compared to Moses, 38, 245, 306; introduction of himself, 316; meaning of name, 285; mission of, 284–96, 310–12; prayer of, 353, 361, 362–90, 392, 393; as priest/scribe, 4, 112, 116, 132, 283, 284, 285, 287, 291, 292, 293, 294, 296, 297, 298–99, 303, 304, 342, 367, 372, 387, 401, 404, 405, 406, 409, 416; response to Artaxerxes' letter, 313–16; teaching in Jerusalem, 4, 112–13; *torah* of, 294–96, 306, 388. *See also* Ezra, book of
Ezra, book of: Artaxerxes' response stops the work, 234–43; assembly and recruiting of the Levites, 326–33; building YHWH's house, stage one: the temple, 195–282; building YHWH's house, stage two: the people, 283–427; the commissioning: God's command and Cyrus's decree, 122–32; companions of Ezra, 316–25; Ezra's response to Artaxerxes' letter, 313–16; final preparations, 333–45; founding the temple, 206–13; historicity of events in, 256–57, 261, 293, 325; journey and arrival in Jerusalem, 345–53; King Artaxerxes' introduction of Ezra, 296–313; King Darius's supportive response, 258–69; the list of builders, 146–54, 183–94; the list of builders (Israelites), 154–63; the list of builders (other cult personnel), 106–7, 166–76; the list of builders (priests), 163–66; the list of builders (undocumented), 176–83; narrator's introduction of Ezra, 284–96; the obstacle: marriages with the peoples of the lands, 353–90; the obstacle overcome, 390–427; origin, date, history of list(s), 191–93; outsiders impede rebuilding the temple, 213–33; overview of list(s), 188–90; the people's response, 132–36; purposes of list(s), 193–94; the reclamation of the temple vessels, 136–45; renewed building activities and inquiry, 243–58; restoring the altar and cult, 196–206; the temple and its cult are fully restored, 269–82. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
Ezra Memoir, 6, 7, 24, 26–27, 283, 284, 292, 313–16, 325, 327, 332, 333, 334, 342, 344, 346–51, 353, 387, 388–89, 391, 398, 400
Ezra-Nehemiah (EN): date, authorship, versions, and canonical settings, 5–7, 29–32; in early Christian sources, 39; in early Jewish sources, 35–37; genre, 8; history of interpretation, 35–44; Japhet's approach, 28–29; in later Jewish sources, 38–39; in modern interpretations, 41–42; in Muslim/Islamic sources, 40; in Samaritan sources, 40; sources and composition, 24–32; structure, 5; style and language, 7–8; theology of, 33–35; unity of, 32–33; Williamson's approach, 27–28; Wright's approach, 28. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources

Festival of the Unleavened Bread, 111, 196, 275, 280

Geba, sons/men of, 160
Gedaliah, 414–15
Gerizim, Mount, 40
Gershom, 317–18, 324
Gibbar, 158
Gibeon, 158, 173, 189
gifts for the temple, 4, 42, 105, 132, 134, 136, 178, 183, 283, 330, 333, 336, 338, 340, 341, 344, 345, 347, 348, 350, 352, 353, 380, 411
God of Heaven, 105, 110, 111, 112, 122, 124, 244, 252, 258, 265, 266, 296–97, 299, 303–4
God of Israel, 126, 130–31, 197, 215, 216, 270, 278–80, 287, 301, 302, 348, 365, 377
gold. *See* silver and gold
governor(s): of Ammon (Shobai), 171; Arsanus, 236; Bagohi, 18, 22, 153, 268; Bagoses, 294; Belshunu, 223; of Egypt, 294; Elnathan, 18, 321; Hezekiah, 157; of the Judeans, 18, 155, 264; Nehemiah, 181, 319; Persian, 181, 266, 294; role of, 152, 155, 182, 236, 264; Sanballat, 178, 228; Sheshbazzar, 110, 139, 144–45, 150, 213, 245, 253; Tattenai, 109, 110, 111, 243, 244, 248, 255, 256, 258, 269, 270; use of the term, 181, 253; Zerubbabel, 144–45, 149–50, 151, 181, 197, 198, 215, 246, 247, 253, 257, 321. *See also* satraps
Greece, 9, 12, 13, 20, 124, 127, 204, 222, 384

Habaiah, sons of, 178
Haggai (prophet), 4, 31, 109, 245–46
Hakkatan, sons of, 322
Hakkoz: family, 351–52; sons of, 178–79
Hanani, 14, 416–17
Hananiah, 321, 419
Harsha, 174
Hashabiah, 330, 336–38
Hashubah, 321
Hassophereth/Sophereth, 175
Hattush, 317–19, 324
Hellenistic period, 6, 15, 17, 19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 32, 143, 158–60, 162, 165, 178, 188, 189, 192, 218, 223, 239, 240, 241, 257, 263, 266, 295, 319, 353, 359, 383, 390
Henadad, sons of, 208–9
Herod (King), 275
Hezekiah, 157
high priests: assignment of, 183; Eliashib, 30, 198, 397–98; Hilkiah, 286; Jehohanan, 22, 30, 322, 351, 397; at the Jerusalem temple, 22; Jeshua, 151–53, 166, 197, 198, 247, 415, 426; Johanan, 154; Joshua, 151, 152, 198, 246; marriage stipulations for, 21, 407, 412, 415, 416, 426; purification of, 152, 201, 273. *See also* priests
Hilkiah, 286
Hirsch, Samson Raphael, 427
Hittites, 357
Hodaviah, sons of, 167–68
Holiness Code, 202, 378, 387
"holy seed," 360, 365, 379. *See also* consecrated seed
House of God, 105, 107–12, 114–16, 122, 126, 146, 153, 160, 169, 183, 185, 186, 202, 206–7, 209, 215, 219, 234, 237, 244, 251, 253, 254, 258–59, 261, 263, 264, 266, 269, 272, 276, 280, 297, 303, 304, 326, 330, 342, 345–47, 349–50, 370, 391, 397, 401, 403, 404. *See also* temple(s)

Iddo, 245, 246, 247
Iddo (of Casiphia), 329
idolatry, 356, 358, 362, 372, 378, 382
Idumeans, 21
Immer, 177; sons of, 164, 416–17
Inaros, 31
intermarriage. *See* exogamy; marriage
Ishmael, 417
Israel, 20, 21, 42–43, 177, 338, 375, 385, 386, 392, 397, 405, 418–19; restoration of, 188, 193; sons of, 278, 288, 330; tribes of, 273. *See also* God of Israel
Ithamar, sons of, 317

Jebusites, 357
Jedaiah, sons of, 163–64

Jehiel, 321, 324, 417, 419; sons of, 392
Jehohanan, 419; as high priest, 30, 322, 351, 397; in Nehemiah, 398
Jehoiachin (King), 138
Jehozadak, 152, 198, 246, 285, 292
Jeremiah (prophet), 105, 122, 123, 135, 141, 144. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
Jericho, sons of, 162
Jerusalem, 126, 130, 302–3, 306, 342, 402, 403–4, 427; archaeological evidence from, 17–18; arrival in, 345–53; celebration of YHWH's house, 4–5; consecration of, 4; destruction of, 43, 233; destruction of the temple, 37, 138; rebuilding of temple, 4, 5, 36, 105–11, 113–14, 121, 125, 132–35, 136, 145; rebuilding of wall, 4; size of, 17. *See also* Judah
Jeshua (son of Jehozadak; also Joshua), 4, 15, 29, 31, 107–8, 109, 151–53, 156, 197–98, 208, 215, 216, 247, 347, 414–15; as high priest, 151–53, 166, 197, 198, 246, 247, 415, 426; house of, 163–64; sons of, 167–68
Jews, 19–20
Joab, 156; sons of, 321, 323
Johanan, 154, 322, 324
Jonathan, 320, 324; son of Asahel, 408
Joseph (son of Jacob), 232, 412; in Ezra, 421
Joshua (son of Nun), 36, 291
Josiah (King), 31, 32
Josiphiah, sons of, 321, 322, 324
Judah, 126, 130, 133, 306, 324, 339, 402, 403–4, 418; adversaries of, 215; destruction of, 15, 20; governors of, 18; history of, 41; and its neighbors, 20–22; and the Judean diaspora, 22–24; kingdom of, 3, 15; map, *16;* people of, 19–20, 217–18; in the Persian Period, 9, 15–19; reconstruction of, 13, 18–19, 34, 105–11, 113–14, 125, 423; "returnees" to, 4–5, 15–19, 34, 36, 43, 106–7; sons of, 208; towns of, 148–49, 188–89, 193–94. *See also* Jerusalem
Judahites, 19–20
Judeans, 19–20, 229, 384–85; in Babylonia, 23–24; in Elephantine, Egypt, 19, 22–23, 124, 125, 130, 158, 189, 329, 377; governors of, 18, 155, 264. *See also* governor(s)

Kadmiel, 208; sons of, 167–68
Kelaiah, 418
Kelita, 418, 425
Keros/Keiros, 172
Koresh, David, 127

Laban, 172
languages: Akkadian, 7, 291; Aramaic, 4, 7, 38, 128, 224–25, 237–43, 297–99; Armenian, 39; Assyrian, 38; Biblical Aramaic, 7; Classical/Late Biblical Hebrew, 7; cuneiform writing, 331; Elamite, 224; Ethiopic, 39; Greek, 37, 39; Hebrew, 7, 38, 128, 129; Late Aramaic, 7; Late Biblical Hebrew, 7; Latin, 39; Old Persian, 7; Persian, 8; Samaritan, 40; Slavonic, 39
Levant, 339
Levi, sons of, 113, 326, 327, 330
Levites, 134, 136, 167, 170–71, 208, 209, 271, 289, 325–28, 330, 408, 418, 425–26; priests and, 28, 30, 105, 107, 108, 112, 114, 132–33, 168, 169, 177, 183, 187, 188, 195, 206–7, 213, 269, 272, 273–75, 277, 284, 285–86, 288, 296, 297, 300, 304, 305, 316, 326, 331, 332, 333, 336–38, 340, 341–43, 347, 354, 355, 381, 396
Lists of builders, 146–54, 183–94; Israelites, 154–63; other cult personnel, 106–7, 166–76; priests, 163–66; undocumented, 176–83
Lod, 162
Lot (nephew of Abraham), 357

Mahli, 330
Manasseh, 419
Marathon, battle of, 12
marriage: abomination in, 114, 115, 201, 354, 356, 360, 362, 363, 371, 372, 373, 375, 376–83, 393, 412; contracts for, 22, 23, 358, 359, 408, 415–16, 425; in Deuteronomy, 357–58, 359, 371, 412; in Ezra *9,* 353–54, 358, 360–62, 374–76,

marriage (*continued*)
378–79, 382, 389, 390–91, 394, 396; in 1 Kings, 358; and landownership, 375, 393; in Leviticus, 416; mixed (intermarriage), 14, 200, 301, 343, 354, 356, 361–62, 376, 378–79, 384, 398–99, 402, 423, 426; as sanctified union, 360, 405; verbs referring to, 359, 374–76, 389, 405, 407, 426. *See also* divorce; endogamy; exogamy
Mendelssohn, Moses, 225
Merari, 330
Meremoth, son of Uriah, 30, 114, 178, 345, 346, 347, 351–52, 420
Meshullam, 321, 328, 408, 419
Mesopotamia, 142, 149, 204, 213, 231, 259, 260, 332, 335, 338
Mibtahiah, 185, 322
minas, 107, 183, 186–87, 344
Minimalist School, 43
Mithredath, 139, 222–23
mixed marriage. *See* exogamy; marriage
Mizpah, 20, 130, 135, 160, 304
Moab, 21, 357
Moabites, 357–58, 375
monetary units, 186, 338–40, 344; darics, 186, 340, 344; drachmas, 340; minas, 107, 183, 186–87, 344. *See also* silver and gold
Mordecai (biblical), 37, 153
Moses (biblical), 186, 200, 210, 331, 355, 371, 372, 374, 394, 396, 410, 412, 420; book of, 111, 269, 272, 274, 288, 291; death of, 161; Ezra compared to, 38, 245, 306; historicity of, 26, 315; invention of trumpet by, 209; *torah* of, 38, 40, 41, 107, 112, 196–97, 199, 203, 284, 287–88, 291, 294, 296, 301
Muslim/Islamic sources, 40–41

Nabonidus, 213
Nathan, 328, 420
Nebo, sons of, 161, 421
Nebuchadnezzar/Nebuchadnezor II (King), 138, 142, 144, 148, 252, 253, 263, 327
Nehemiah, 4, 5, 13, 15, 29–32, 36, 37, 42, 153, 335–36, 423; as governor, 181, 319; Jewish traditions concerning, 38. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
Nehemiah Memoir, 6, 7, 19, 24, 26–28, 29, 31, 293, 309, 314–16, 327, 346, 362, 388, 390
Nehemiah's wall, 17, 26, 30, 36, 315, 371, 390
Netinim, 171–72, 176, 187–88, 288–89, 304–5, 326, 331, 332, 333, 424
New Moon, 202
Noadiah, 347, 392

Ono, sons of, 162
Osnappar (Asnappar), 228

Pahath-moab, 155, 189–90, 323, 324; sons of, 320, 419
papponomy, 31
Parosh: family, 319; sons of, 155, 319, 323, 324, 419
Pashhur, sons of, 164, 417
Passover, 39, 111, 173, 196, 200, 201, 212, 216, 265, 271, 275–82, 291, 307, 345–46, 348, 351
Pax Persica, 334
Pax Romana, 334
Peace of Callias, 12
Peloponnesian Wars, 12
Pentateuch, 7, 21, 40, 41–42, 197, 199–200, 202, 207, 225, 268, 274, 279, 280, 282, 286, 288, 291, 294–96, 307, 318, 327, 329, 330, 340, 349, 371–72, 383, 386, 387, 398, 403, 406, 425
people(s) of the land(s), 200–201, 205–6, 217–20, 355–56, 371–72, 382–84, 392–94, 405–6
Pericles, 411
Perizzites, 357
Persepolis, 9
Persian Empire, 13, 121, 124, 189, 279, 306, 311–12, 334–35, 384, 397; and Egypt, 9, 12–13, 21, 181, 228, 230, 233, 256, 285, 289, 293, 311, 312, 350; extent of, 20–22; history of, 9, 12–13; influence of, 42; maps, 10–11; Persian administration, 13–15; wars with Egypt, 13, 241, 384; wars with Greece, 20

Persian Wars, 12
Pethahiah, 418, 426
Phinehas, 286; sons of, 317, 347
Phoenicia, 223, 228, 233, 234, 298, 304
Pochereth-hazzebaim, 175
prayer: communal, 4, 5, 24, 168, 208, 418; of Ezra, 353, 361, 362–90, 392, 393; fasting and 334, 387; God's name in, 395; of Hannah, 405; of Nehemiah, 266; role of Levites in, 133; of Solomon, 368
Priestly Source, 41, 202, 295, 327, 329, 379, 380
priests: Aaronide, 171, 286, 324, 332; commissioning of, 316, 333, 336–38, 342; as custodians of *torah*, 199, 287, 298, 299, 399; Eliashib, 397; Ezra as, 4, 112, 116, 132, 283, 284, 285, 287, 291, 292, 293, 294, 296, 297, 298–99, 303, 304, 342, 367, 372, 387, 401, 404, 405, 406, 409, 416; holiness of, 380–81, 412; in Jerusalem, 22, 112, 258, 265–66, 297; legitimacy of, 180–82; and Levites, 28, 30, 105, 107, 108, 112, 114, 132–33, 168, 169, 177, 183, 187, 188, 195, 206–7, 213, 269, 272, 273–75, 277, 284, 285–86, 288, 296, 297, 300, 304, 305, 316, 326, 331, 332, 333, 336–38, 340, 341–43, 347, 354, 355, 381, 396; Levitical, 287, 399, 407; lists of, 24, 106, 147, 150, 151, 163–66, 305, 323–25, 330, 331; Meremoth, 30, 114, 178, 345, 346, 347, 351–52, 420; as musicians, 213; purification of, 277; as remnant of Israel, 136; role/authority of, 28, 133, 143, 277–78, 291, 303, 340, 342, 347; as transgressors, 362, 367; translation of, 266, 272, 302, 319; for Urim and Thummim, 107, 176, 182–83, 347, 351; vestments of, 187, 209; Zadokite, 286, 327. *See also* high priests
purification: of the altar, 273; fasting for, 334; of the high priest, 152, 201, 273; of Jerusalem, 201; of the Levites, 277; offerings for, 111, 114, 272–73, 345, 348–49; for Passover, 280; physical, 277, 379; of priests, 277; ritual, 201, 379, 394; of the Temple, 269, 272–73

Questions of Ezra, 39

Ramat Rahel, 18, 130
Rehum, 154, 190, 225–26, 235
remnant, 21, 40, 115, 126, 131, 136, 175, 217, 361, 363, 367–69, 376–77
Revelation of Ezra, 39
Rezin, 173
Ruth (biblical), 358, 375

sacrifices, 110, 135, 158, 177, 182, 197, 200, 201–2, 291, 298, 302, 304; burnt offerings, 199, 261; as guilt offerings, 416; livestock, 403; place for, 203–5, 258, 261, 265; as purification offerings, 273, 349; translation of, 302, 349
Salmanasses, 216
salt, 231–32, 304
Samaria, 4, 15, 21–22, 36, 40, 109, 126, 130–31, 153, 178, 193, 204, 214–21, 223, 226–28, 232, 234, 237, 248, 251, 260, 273, 280, 296, 302, 303, 304, 374, 375, 382, 383–84, 386, 394, 406, 412
Samarians, 21, 200–201, 213, 215, 217, 221, 383–84
Samaritan Chronicles, 40
Samaritans, 21, 36, 40, 214, 215, 217, 218, 228, 259, 276
Sanabasaros, 145
Sanabassar, 144
Sanballat, 4, 22–23, 37, 40, 178, 228, 383
Sargon (Assyrian king), 21
Sasabasar, 253–54
satraps, 14, 153, 226, 231, 243, 244, 248, 255, 264, 311, 350. *See also* governor(s)
Saul (King), 133, 185, 375
Sea of Jaffa, 204
Senaah, sons of, 162–63, 189–90
Seraiah, 153; son of, 285–86
Shabbethai, 408
Shallum, 418, 421; sons of, 170–71
Shealtiel, 198, 419
Sheba (queen of), 339

Shecaniah, 319, 392, 395, 398–400; sons of, 320, 324
Shelomith, 18, 321–22
Shemaiah, 322–23, 324, 328, 417, 419–20
Shenazzar, 144–45
Shephatiah, 155, 175, 323, 324; sons of, 320
Sherebiah, 330, 336–38
Sheshbazzar, 4, 23, 36, 105, 136–37, 141, 247, 254, 256, 257; as governor, 110, 139, 144–45, 150, 213, 245, 253
Shethar-bozenai, 248
Sidon, 384
Sidonians, 203
Silk Road, 334
silver and gold, 301–2, 338–40, 344, 346, 351
singers, 106, 107, 112, 116, 146, 147, 166–70, 172, 176, 183, 185, 187–88, 210, 284, 288–89, 297, 304–5, 329, 413, 418, 424
Sisera, 174
social memory, 43
Solomon (King), 137, 185, 235, 251, 339, 392; servants of, 175, 176, 331
Song of Deborah, 169, 185
Song of the Sea, 169, 185
Sophereth/Hassophereth, 175
Sparta, 12, 186, 231
Sukkoth, Festival of, 197, 201, 205, 291, 295
Susa, 9
Susaites, 227
Syria, 15, 125–26, 149, 223, 228, 233, 248, 304, 312, 339, 413

Tabeel, 222–24
Tattenai, 249–50, 257, 258–59, 264, 350; as governor, 109, 110, 111, 243, 244, 248, 255, 256, 258, 269, 270
taxes, 230, 304–5
Tel-harsha (Thelarēsa), 176–77
Tel-melah (Thelmeleth), 176–77
temple(s): to Apollo, 305; in Babylon, 253; builders of, 146–94; Cyrus's support for, 36, 122, 127, 128, 267–69; Darius's support for, 12, 110–11, 151, 258–67; dedication of, 275–82; destruction of, 3, 37, 121, 135, 318; in Egypt, 14–15, 22–23, 130, 294, 411; First Temple, 27; founding of, 18, 107–8, 111, 197, 206–13, 290, 292; gifts for, 4, 42, 105, 132, 134, 136, 178, 183, 283, 330, 333, 336, 338, 340, 341, 344, 345, 347, 348, 350, 352, 353, 380, 411; of Karnak, 366; location of, 130; in Lycia, 311; obstacles to rebuilding, 108–9, 213–43; restoration/rebuilding of, 3–5, 12, 36, 109–10, 121, 123, 195–206, 243–58, 269–75, 309, 370; Samaritan Temple, 27; Second Temple, 37, 38, 152, 332, 366; tent peg as metaphor for, 369; terms for, 124, 129. *See also* House of God; Temple vessels
Temple vessels: dishonoring of, 144; restoration/reclamation of, 4, 5, 105–6, 121, 128, 136–44, 263, 342, 348, 394
Thummim. *See* Urim and Thummim
Tirshata, 181–82, 187
Tobiah (biblical), 37, 177–78, 358, 360
toll-tax. *See* taxes
torah, 4, 5, 20, 42, 116, 133, 134, 144, 158, 165, 171, 184, 198, 200–201, 204–5, 225, 270, 274, 275, 280, 283, 286, 290, 292–93, 297, 307–8, 310–13, 330, 334, 354, 355–58, 360, 364, 372–73, 380–81, 391, 392, 394, 395, 396, 398, 405, 409, 415–16, 418, 421, 424, 426; authorship of, 41; change in script of, 38; of Ezra, 294–96, 306, 388; of God, 371; Jewish submission to, 427; in Josephus, 414; of Moses, 38, 40, 41, 107, 112, 196–97, 199, 203, 284, 287–88, 291, 294, 296, 301; priests as custodians of 199, 287, 298, 299, 399; regarding foreign wives, 396, 399–400, 407; teachings of, 34–35
tribal identification, 132
trumpets, 209–10, 212
Tyre, 384
Tyrians, 203

Udjahorresnet, 14, 129, 181, 265, 306, 311
Uriah, sons of, 347, 351
Urim and Thummim, 107, 176, 178, 182–83, 347, 351–52, 418

Uzayr, 40. *See also* Ezra (scribe/priest)

Vision of Ezra, 39
Vulgate, 7, 33, 35, 37, 235, 289

women: foreign, 393–96, 398–400, 405–10, 412–13, 421–22, 424–26; Judean, 360, 374–75, 410–12; as musicians, 169, 185. *See also* exogamy; marriage

xenophobia, 343
Xerxes (King), 36–37, 213. *See also* Ahasuerus/Xerxes

Yeḥizqiah the governor, 18
Yeho'ezer, 18
Yehoḥanan the priest, 18
Yehud, 247, 250–51. *See also* Judah

Zadok, 286, 332
Zechariah: in Ezra, 319, 320, 324, 328, 419; prophet, 4, 31, 109, 245–47; son of Bebai, 322. *See also* Index of Ancient Sources
Zedekiah (King), 135
Zeraiah, 322. *See also* Zechariah
Zerubbabel, 4, 15, 29, 31, 35, 36, 40, 107–8, 109, 139, 196, 212, 214, 216, 254, 256, 258, 322; as governor, 144–45, 149–50, 151, 181, 197, 198, 215, 246, 247, 253, 257, 321

Index of Modern Authors

Ackerman, Susan, 134, 382
Ackroyd, Peter R., 137, 138, 263
Adler, Rachel, 373
Aharoni, Yohanan, 172, 174
Albertz, Rainer, 79, 295
Albright, William F., 150, 293
Allrik, H. L., 154, 155, 156, 163, 184
Alstola, Tero, 23, 126, 149
Alt, Albrecht, 130, 250
Alter, Robert, 155, 169, 171, 180, 225, 290, 303, 327, 329, 393
Anderson, Cheryl, 425
André-Salvini, B., 232
Arendt, Hannah, 336, 343
Arnold, B. T., 242, 247
Avigad, Nahman, 155, 164, 173, 190, 414
Azzoni, Annalisa, 416

Baden, Joel S., 295
Balcells Gallarreta, J. E., 204, 382
Barstad, Hans M., 43
Batten, Loring W., 24, 30, 33, 42, 123, 131, 240, 281, 306, 309, 312, 325, 343, 371, 389, 413, 421, 422
Baumann, Gerd, 371
Bautch, Richard J., 295, 353, 361
Becking, Bob, 6, 17, 30, 31, 42, 45, 128, 145, 184, 206, 271, 293, 294, 306, 313, 315, 325, 332, 333, 337, 338, 341, 344, 352, 355, 381, 425
Bedford, Peter Ross, 128, 129, 216, 217, 243, 246, 256–7, 265, 267, 268, 271, 275, 278
Ben Yashar, M., 145
Ben Zvi, Ehud, 6, 8, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 43, 375, 385, 386
Berger, P. R., 139, 145
Berman, Joshua, 242, 247, 248, 249, 256, 295
Berquist, Jon L., 254, 288, 294, 385, 412
Bickerman, Elias J., 123, 125, 128, 129
Blackwell, Christopher W., 404
Blenkinsopp, Joseph, 6, 14, 19, 28, 30, 33, 42, 45, 79, 86, 128, 129, 130, 131, 135, 140, 141, 142, 143, 145, 148, 160, 161, 172, 173, 174, 175, 181, 187, 188, 191, 192, 203, 206, 208, 209, 210, 211, 218, 225, 236, 241, 249, 251, 256, 259, 261, 264, 265, 266, 270, 271, 273, 277, 279, 280, 281, 293, 299, 309, 310, 315, 317, 318, 324, 325, 328, 329, 330, 332, 344, 348, 354, 356, 359, 362, 365, 368, 369, 376, 387, 388, 392, 395, 397, 402, 408, 409, 410, 412, 421
Bloch, Yigal, 287
Blum, Erhard, 295, 307
Boda, Mark J., 33, 213

Boer, Roland, 179
Böhler, Dieter, 31
Bracke, John M., 164
Brett, Mark G., 8, 193, 194, 250, 265, 281, 365, 369, 378, 379, 381, 384, 385, 386, 402, 413
Briant, Pierre, 9, 12, 13, 14, 127, 177, 218, 223, 229, 230, 232, 248, 260, 300, 305, 370
Briend, J., 128
Brown, Ann, 31, 410
Buster, Aubrey, 8, 176, 317
Bynum, Caroline Walker, 334

Cameron, G. G., 139, 224, 255, 260
Camp, Claudia V., 360, 393
Carlson-Hasler, Laura, 8
Carr, David M., 287, 293, 294, 295
Carroll, Robert, 23, 56, 206, 386
Carter, Charles E., 17, 184, 337
Charlesworth, James H., 39
Childs, Brevard, 44
Clines, D. A. J., 6, 30, 31, 34, 42, 45, 128, 153, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 176, 206, 218, 219, 249, 264, 289, 293, 304, 307, 332, 354, 369, 415, 418
Coggins, R. J., 21, 218, 219
Cohen, O., 7
Cohen, Shaye J. D., 19, 20, 382
Cohen, Steven M., 410
Collins, John J., 86, 135
Conczorowski, Benedikt J., 63, 389, 390, 412
Coogan, Michael D., 320, 325
Cook, John A., 7, 235, 300
Cook, John M., 248
Cowley, A. E., 124, 153, 154, 260
Cross, Frank M., 31, 322, 397

Davies, Philip R., 23, 42–43, 294
Davis, K., 6
Dequeker, Luc, 271
Deutsch, Robert, 154
Dewald, Carolyn, 344
Dinur, U., 159
Dion, P. E., 145
Dor, Yonina, 315, 363, 368, 389, 394, 398, 414, 416, 425, 426
Douglas, Mary, 279
Driver, G. R., 300
Dušek, Jan, 130, 383
Dyck, Jonathan E., 193, 194, 353

Edelman, Diana, 16, 17, 136, 162, 189, 256, 275
Edenburg, Cynthia, 199, 274
Ehrenberg, V., 411
Eisenstadt, S. N., 370
Elayi, J., 20, 60, 229
Eph'al, I., 170, 306
Eskenazi, Tamara Cohn, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 127, 145, 146, 150, 175, 178, 179, 180, 191, 201, 206, 211, 214, 232, 242, 243, 249, 256, 264, 275, 278, 281, 287, 312, 315, 322, 325, 327, 336, 353, 358, 360, 361, 365, 375, 378, 385, 387, 388, 392, 393, 396, 399, 400, 408, 410, 411, 413, 426

Falk, Z. W., 308
Faust, Avraham, 16, 18, 20, 21, 130, 135, 136, 189
Feig, N., 159
Feldman, I., 6
Fensham, F. C., 140, 141, 249, 290, 307, 308, 312
Finkelstein, Israel, 16, 17, 130, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 165, 188, 189, 192, 194
Fishbane, Michael, 199, 274, 291, 357, 358, 371
Fitzmyer, J. A., 250
Fleishman, Joseph, 249, 251, 252, 254, 257, 264, 267
Folmer, Margaretha, 230, 240
Fonrobert, Charlotte, 373
Frei, P., 63, 267, 307, 311
Frevel, Christian, 381, 385, 389, 390
Fried, Lisbeth S., 6, 15, 20, 30, 31, 42, 45, 128, 129, 130, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 145, 147, 148, 153, 157, 161, 164, 168, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 178, 180, 181, 183, 184, 185, 187, 190, 192, 193, 197, 198, 200, 201, 202, 205, 206, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 217, 218, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 231, 235, 238, 241, 248, 250, 252, 253, 254,

Fried, Lisbeth S. (*continued*)
257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 263, 264, 267, 270, 271, 273, 275, 276, 289, 290, 291, 293, 294, 298, 299, 301, 304, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 315, 321, 329, 339, 346, 347, 350, 351, 355, 356, 362, 369, 370, 392, 393, 395, 396, 397, 404, 406, 407, 408, 410, 411, 412, 414, 422, 423, 425, 426
Friedman, Richard Elliot, 295, 296
Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, 211, 358, 375
Fulton, Deirdre N., 31, 166

Gadot, Yuval, 18, 20, 79, 135
Galling, Kurt, 192, 235, 397
Gelb, I. J., 135
Gertz, J. C., 199, 287, 295, 371
Goswell, Greg, 6
Gottwald, N. K., 370
Grabbe, Lester L., 7, 9, 18, 25–26, 31, 42, 45, 128, 192, 201, 206, 218, 229, 240, 241, 245, 251, 252, 257, 265, 267, 269, 287, 303, 309, 310, 315, 316, 339, 344, 372, 383, 384, 410
Grätz, Sebastian, 260, 262, 266, 301
Grayson, A. K., 228
Gropp, D., 21, 260
Gryson, R., 32
Gunneweg, A. H. J., 26, 45, 136, 143, 197, 198, 217, 240, 251, 259, 260, 310, 315

Hallock, R. T., 153, 231, 251
Harrington, Hannah K., 279, 303, 343, 379, 380, 381
Hausmann, Jutta, 131, 368, 377
Hayes, Christine E., 303, 353, 379, 381
Heckl, Raik, 22
Heichelheim, Fritz M., 411
Heltzer, Michael, 162, 172, 187, 223, 226, 230, 235, 250, 267, 270, 271, 272, 273, 289, 335, 338, 407, 408, 410
Henkelman, Wouter F. M., 9, 14, 21, 189, 224, 230
Hensel, Benedikt, 21, 201, 216, 221, 228, 408, 410
Hensley, L. V., 128
Hjelm, Ingrid, 40
Hobbes, Thomas, 41
Hoglund, Kenneth G., 17–18, 21, 126, 294, 370, 375, 393, 399, 402, 403, 412
Holmgren, F. C., 124, 225
Hölscher, Gustav, 325
Honigman, Sylvie, 6, 31, 32, 33, 36
Hoonacker, A. van, 24, 30, 293, 351, 352, 371
Hornby, Lucy, 231
Houtman, Cornelis, 274
Hunt, Alice, 133, 166, 286, 324, 332
Hurowitz, Victor (Avigdor), 128, 136, 197, 212, 213
Hutton, Jeremy, 133, 134

In der Smitten, W. Th., 293, 309, 315, 325, 326, 335
Ishida, T., 357

Jacobs, Sandra, 287
Janzen, David, 24, 25, 257, 281, 309, 310, 312, 343, 389
Japhet, Sara, 5, 6, 7, 8, 24, 26, 27, 28–29, 30, 32, 33, 38, 45, 122, 123, 128, 132, 134, 139, 140, 141, 142, 145, 150, 172, 175, 197, 198, 200, 206, 207, 210, 242, 254, 257, 270, 278, 281, 282, 293, 295, 296, 304, 315, 321, 324, 325, 327, 333, 338, 341, 344, 347, 352, 353, 354, 365, 369, 372, 377, 384, 385, 388, 389, 393, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 402, 403, 404, 414, 418, 421, 422, 423, 424, 426
Jerusalmi, Isaac, 250, 300
Johnson, M. Willa, 378, 381, 385, 386
Jones, Christopher M., 33, 278, 281–82, 311, 312
Judd, E., 201, 206, 360, 361, 365, 396, 408, 410
Jursa, Michael, 9, 14, 139, 222, 230, 231, 305, 370, 403

Kalimi, Isaac, 144
Kapelrud, Arvid S., 26, 314, 315, 335, 388, 398
Kartveit, Magnar, 21, 216, 383, 384
Keel, Othmar, 164, 165
Kellermann, Ulrich, 188, 309, 315, 325, 326, 344, 352
Klawans, Jonathan, 353, 379

Knauf, E. A., 130, 135, 161
Knoppers, Gary N., 21, 23–24, 31, 130, 134, 136, 166, 201, 215, 216, 218, 228, 286, 295, 302, 306, 307, 308, 310, 311, 312, 356, 370, 383, 384
Knowles, Melody D., 303
Koch, Ido, 289, 327, 347
Kochman, Michael, 162, 172, 187, 223, 226, 235, 250, 267, 270, 271, 272, 273, 289, 329, 335, 338, 352, 407, 408, 410
Koltun-Fromm, Naomi, 380
Kraeling, Emil G., 262
Kraemer, David, 33, 291
Kraft, Robert A., 39
Kratz, Reinhard G., 23, 24, 191, 206, 257, 295, 307, 308, 309, 315, 325, 390
Krause, Joachim J., 136
Kuhrt, Amélie, 9, 12, 13, 14, 127, 129, 138, 224, 248, 256, 265, 280, 305, 307, 311, 312, 368

Laird, Donna, 155, 190, 192, 193, 194, 205, 211, 242, 255, 277, 356, 367, 385, 386
Lange, Armin, 199
Langgut, D., 18
Langille, Tim, 383
Lau, Peter H. W., 281, 282
Lazarus Yafeh, H., 40
Lebram, J. C. H., 293
Lecoq, Pierre, 251
Lee, John W., 262
Lehmann, Gunnar, 13, 20, 384
Lemaire, André, 17, 43, 154, 172, 173
Lemos, T. M., 408
Leuchter, Mark, 133, 134, 329, 332
Levenson, Jon D., 140
Levin, Yigal, 29, 219
Levine, B. A., 172, 175
Levinson, Bernard M., 199, 279, 287, 295, 371
Lewis, D., 305
Lipschits, Oded, 16, 17, 18, 20, 43, 125, 130, 135, 136, 159, 162, 178, 179, 184, 415
Littman, Robert J., 411
Livingston, Gretchen, 410
Luckenbill, David Daniel, 142

Magdalene, Rachel F., 307
Magen, Y., 130
Maier, Christle M., 392, 393
Mallau, Hans H., 214, 243, 256, 281
Marbury, Herbert R., 370, 375, 385, 386, 399, 413
Mathews, H. J., 39
Matzal, Stefan, 214, 243, 256, 281
McBride, S. Dean, 295, 413
Meier, S., 175
Meiggs, R., 305
Meyer, Eduard, 128, 145, 181, 222, 225, 238, 307, 309
Meyers, Carol, 86, 152, 160, 164, 185, 204, 246, 247, 256, 319, 321, 382
Meyers, Eric M., 152, 160, 164, 246, 247, 256, 319, 321
Mieroop, Marc C. van de, 43, 142
Mildenberg, L., 348
Milgrom, Jacob, 199, 202, 204, 273, 279, 349, 353, 362, 363, 367, 374, 379, 380, 405, 416
Min, Kyun-Jin, 6, 277
Mitchell, Peter, 185
Mittleman, Alan L., 427
Mowinckel, S., 26, 128, 192, 314, 315, 388, 398
Mueller, J. R., 39
Myers, J. M., 24, 30, 33, 42, 145, 281, 293, 304, 318, 335, 352, 382, 408, 424

Naveh, Joseph, 9, 25, 170, 230, 231, 249
Newman, Judith H., 363
Nikel, J., 128
Nims, Charles E., 225
Noth, Martin, 271, 293, 315
Novotny, Jamie, 213
Nurmela, Risto, 134

Oded, B., 197, 201, 206
Olmstead, A. T., 248, 305
Olyan, Saul M., 279, 353, 379
Osborne, Robin, 413
Oswald, Wolfgang, 392, 411

Pakkala, Juha, 24, 28, 31, 206, 288, 306, 308, 309, 310, 312, 315, 319, 323, 324, 325, 344, 354, 389, 390

Paulissiann, Robert, 179
Pavlovsky, V., 339
Pearce, Laurie E., 9, 14, 23, 43, 157, 325
Perdue, L. G., 135
Petersen, David L., 152, 212, 256
Pohlmann, K.-F., 31
Porten, Bezalel, 17, 128, 187, 193, 226, 293
Pritchard, James B., 124, 366
Pummer, Reinhard, 21
Purvis, James D., 144

Rabinowitz, Y., 130, 153, 172, 210, 299, 320, 321, 322, 329
Rainey, A. F., 223, 228, 248
Redditt, Paul L., 33, 184
Redford, Donald B., 295, 311
Rendtorff, Rolf, 200, 295
Rich, Adrienne, 3
Richey, M., 415
Rimmon-Kenan, S., 26
Robbins, G. A., 39
Rom-Shiloni, Dalit, 35, 125, 199, 206, 219, 287, 295, 371, 377, 378, 386, 387
Rooke, Deborah W., 133, 166, 286, 324, 332
Rosenberg, A. J., 225, 340
Rosenfeld, Michael J., 361, 410
Roth, Martha T., 359, 374, 425
Rothenbusch, Ralf, 254
Rowley, H. H., 30, 241, 351, 371, 397, 398
Roy, J., 413
Rubin, I., 6
Rudolph, W., 42, 143, 150, 161, 309, 351, 354, 388, 422
Rundgren, F., 264, 308

Sapin, J., 229
Sass, Benjamin, 155, 164, 173, 190, 414
Satlow, Michael L., 279
Saysell, Csilla, 361, 379, 380, 381
Schaeder, H. H., 128, 224, 238, 287, 294, 310
Schaper, Joachim, 134, 166, 265, 275, 286, 352
Schmid, K., 199, 287, 295, 371
Schniewdewind, William M., 287, 294
Schroer, Silvia, 164
Schwartz, Baruch J., 295
Schwiderski, Dirk, 240, 241, 263
Sealey, Raphael, 404
Segal, Michael, 141
Sergi, Omar, 136
Shaked, Shaul, 9, 25, 230, 231, 249
Sievers, Joseph, 25
Silverman, Jason M., 139, 145
Singer-Avitz, Lily, 161
Slotki, Judah J., 235
Smith, D. L. *See* Smith-Christopher, Daniel L.
Smith-Christopher, Daniel L., 334, 353, 385, 386, 393
Southwood, Katherine, 35, 142, 201, 206, 217, 353, 361, 365, 376, 378, 380, 385, 386, 393, 395, 399, 402, 405, 410, 416, 425
Spinoza, Benedict de, 41, 42, 295
Stackert, Jeffrey, 295
Stahl, Michael J., 126, 131, 215, 280, 377
Steiner, Richard C., 8, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 238, 239, 240–41, 253, 257, 261, 263, 301, 310
Stern, Ephraim, 18, 130, 135, 159, 160, 162, 382
Sternberg, Meir, 27, 290
Stolper, Matthew W., 9, 14, 153, 192, 232, 248, 256
Stone, M., 39
Suiter, David E., 31, 328, 371, 398

Tadmor, H., 128
Talmon, Shemaryahu, 217
Talshir, Zipora, 31, 32
Thiessen, M., 281
Thompson, Thomas L., 401
Thonemann, Peter, 44
Tigay, J. H., 275, 291, 358
Timm, S., 126
Toorn, Karel van der, 225, 239, 293, 294
Torrey, C. C., 6, 24, 25, 26, 32, 41, 42, 128, 143, 188, 192, 194, 240, 293, 309, 314, 352, 353, 354, 388, 398, 422, 424
Tuplin, C., 348

Ulrich, Eugene, 32
Ungnad, A., 248, 256
Ussishkin, David, 17

Vanderhooft, David, 18, 125, 130, 228, 415
VanderKam, James C., 31, 33, 230, 398
van Driel, G., 248
van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W. H., 425
Venema, G. J., 287
Vogt, H. C. M., 281, 365, 371

Waerzeggers, Caroline B., 9, 14, 23, 139, 169, 222, 305
Washington, Harold C., 179, 373, 399, 401
Waterfield, Robin, 344
Weber, R., 32
Weinberg, Joel P., 135, 156, 189, 375, 402, 403
Weingart, Kristin, 136
Wellhausen, Julius, 41, 42, 295, 309
Wertheimer, Jack, 410
Whitelam, Keith W., 43–44, 206
Whittingham, Martin, 40
Willett, Elizabeth, 382
Williamson, Hugh G. M., 6, 18, 19, 24, 26, 27–28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 42, 45, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 130, 131, 134, 136, 138, 139, 140, 143, 145, 148, 155, 165, 166, 168, 172, 177, 179, 181, 183, 186, 190, 192, 193, 200, 206, 208, 209, 210, 211, 218, 219, 222, 224, 225, 226, 227, 229, 230, 232, 235, 236, 238, 240, 241, 242, 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 254, 256, 257, 261, 262, 263, 264, 266, 270, 271, 274, 278, 281, 282, 288, 292, 293, 295, 300, 301, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 309, 315, 319, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 332, 333, 335, 339, 340, 344, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351, 352, 354, 356, 360, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 371, 376, 377, 384, 388, 389, 392, 395, 397, 398, 403, 408, 410, 416, 420, 421, 424, 425
Wills, Lawrence M., 249, 278, 281
Wilson, Robert R., 292
Wiseman, D. J., 138
Wright, Jacob L., 6, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 180, 191, 205, 206, 232, 235, 238, 241, 293, 295, 309, 315, 387, 389, 390, 400
Wulf, C. U., 402
Wunsch, Cornelia, 9, 14, 23, 43, 157, 325
Würthwein, E., 217

Yardeni, Ada, 17, 193
Yaron, Y., 264
Yoo, Philip Y., 6, 26, 30, 34, 42, 199, 200, 287, 288, 292, 293, 294, 295, 315, 323, 325, 342, 351, 354, 365, 387, 388, 389, 406
Younger, K. Lawson, Jr., 329

Zadok, Ran, 155, 157, 174, 175
Zer Kavod, M., 229, 231, 235, 251
Zertal, A., 21, 228
Zevit, Ziony, 17
Zorn, Jeffrey, 20
Zunz, Leopold, 33

Index of Ancient Sources

Hebrew Bible

GENESIS

Chapter 1 278, 355
1:4 278
1:5 334
1:6 278
1:7 278, 406
2:1 377
2:15 157
3:24 394
10:22 156
11:3 172
12:8 160
13:14 175
13:16 422
Chapter 14 286
14:8 175
15:2 418
16:6 366
Chapters 16–21 417
Chapter 19 357
21:10 416
21:13 422
21:18 422
22:6 422
23:7 205, 217
23:10 134
23:12 217
23:13 217
Chapter 24 359
Chapter 28 160
29:3 251
30:10–11 156
30:28 331
30:33 173
31:4 334
31:15 393
32:5 239
34:12 359
36:18 322
36:34 158
41:51 419
42:9 232
42:12 232
45:5 368, 369
46:6 217
49:15 262
50:13 359

EXODUS 329
1:1 122
2:22 318
2:59–60 407
3:5 343
3:16 402
3:17 357

3:22 302
5:5 217
6:7 264
6:8 264–65
6:9 265–66
6:13 394
6:16 330
6:20 420
6:25 286, 318, 347
8:16 394
8:24 355
10:5 355
Chapter 12 277, 279, 282
Chapters 12–13 276
12:1–13:16 276
12:8–20 279
12:18 279
12:27 276
13:3 394
14:8 280
15:2 169
15:11 125
15:16 200
15:20–21 185
15:25 291
18:2 394
18:4 418
18:21–25 355
18:25–26 306
19:6 380
19:8 406
19:16 365, 404
20:17 40
20:19 407
20:24–25 200
21:2–5 399
21:3–4 399
21:4 395
22:2 254
22:16 359
22:21 366
22:30 [ET 31] 380
23:14–17 201
23:16 205
24:3 406
24:7 406
Chapter 25 186
25:2 134
26:33 337
27:1–2 200
Chapter 28 133, 187
28:1–4 209
28:11 174
28:28–30 182
28:39 187
29:1 340
29:1–2 265
29:18 265
29:28 338
29:38–40 265
29:38–42 201
32:16 124
Chapter 35 126, 186
Chapters 35–36 186
Chapters 35–40 174
35:21 126, 134, 186
35:29 126, 134
36:5–6 186
36:13 172
38:24 339
38:25 339
38:26 343
38:27 339
Chapter 39 187
39:30 124
40:9–15 273

LEVITICUS 133, 304

1:2 266
Chapters 1–7 277
1:13 261
1:17 261, 337
2:1–10 182
2:9 266
2:13 265
Chapter 4 273, 349
4:3 367
4:14 349
4:15 402
5:5 377
5:14–26 367, 416
5:15 362, 416
5:15b 362
6:2 [NRSV 6:9] 199, 294
6:7 365

LEVITICUS (*continued*)
6:7–7:6 182
Chapter 7 180
7:1–6 181
7:6 369
7:12–26 405
7:15–20 393
7:16 202
7:32–34 182
Chapter 8 187, 273
8:8 182
10:10 343, 406
10:11 291
10:14 182
11:36 394
Chapter 12 373
Chapters 12–13 416
12:2 373
12:5 373
13:10 172, 369
13:30–36 340
14:45 416
Chapter 15 279
15:19–30 373
15:20 373
15:20–21 373
Chapter 16 273
16:19 277
16:30–31 334
17:3–4 273
Chapter 18 232, 356, 371, 372
18:3 372
18:6–23 373
18:19 372, 373
18:24–30 371, 373
18:26 379
18:27 356
18:27–30 372
18:28–29 372
19:2 340
19:14 177
Chapter 20 232
20:11 232
20:21 373
20:22 372
20:23–26 279
Chapter 21 182
21:6–7 380
21:7 178
21:10–15 415, 416, 426
21:13–15 412
21:14 415
21:21–22 182
Chapter 22 182
22:4–8 181
22:11 182
22:13 182
22:14 343
22:16 367
22:18 202
Chapter 23 197
23:3 334
23:5 276
23:6 279
23:7 343
23:24–25 202
23:39–43 201, 205
24:10–23 358
24:11 322
24:12 235
24:16 331
25:25 180
26:15 376
27:9 340
27:9–15 344
27:9–33 380
27:28 403
27:32 343

NUMBERS 304
Chapter 1 317
Chapters 1–4 345
1:1 155
1:2 319, 323
1:17 331
1:50 359
Chapter 2 140
Chapter 3 344
3:5–10 336, 342
3:5–31 338
3:9 329, 338
3:33–36 330
3:36 330
Chapter 4 207, 344

4:1–16 336
4:7–15 338
4:10–16 342
5:12 362
5:27 362
6:3 [NRSV 6:9] 380
Chapter 7 140, 415
8:5–19 133
8:7 277
8:9–26 207
8:10–19 133
8:14 337
8:16 171
8:26 329
Chapter 9 282
9:6–13 277
10:9 209
10:10 209
11:12 175
12:1 289
12:8 374
13:33 173
14:9 217
15:24 273
15:34 235
Chapter 16 165
16:21 278
18:1–6 133
18:6 171
18:11–19 182
19:3 394
20:25–28 286
Chapter 25 390
25:1–2 358
25:1–15 286, 318
25:10–13 133
Chapter 27 375
27:1–11 179
27:7 406
27:21 182
Chapters 28–29 201, 202
28:2–8 201
28:16 276
Chapter 29 197
29:1 211
29:1–6 202
29:12–34 201
29:12–38 349
29:13–38 205
30:12 177
31:25–30 171
Chapter 33 345
35:25 152
Chapters 35–36 133
Chapter 36 375

DEUTERONOMY 34, 293, 294–95, 351, 375, 388, 413

1:16–17 306
1:28 372
2:34 403
4:6–8 306
4:14 291
4:44 295
7:1 358
7:1–4 356, 358, 372, 374, 412
7:1–5 357
7:1–6 35, 357, 358, 371
7:1–9 372
7:3 374, 375, 376
7:4 357
7:6 379, 380
7:25–26 356
10:8 337
10:22 422
10:44 124
11:8–9 375
12:5 329
12:21 422
12:30–31 356
13:13–15 356
14:2 380
14:21 380
14:24 422
15:19–23 273
Chapter 16 282
16:1–2 276
16:6 276
16:13–15 205
16:18 306, 407
17:1–4 356
17:2–7 356

DEUTERONOMY (*continued*)
17:4 409
17:8–11 407
17:8–13 306
17:9 133
17:9–11 399
17:11 396, 407
17:18 287
18:12 356, 378
19:2 337
20:17 356, 357
20:17–18 356
20:18 356
21:10–14 359, 406
21:12–13 399
22:15–20 402
23:2 35
23:4 [NRSV 23:3] 358
23:4–7 35, 358, 372
23:4–9 [NRSV 23:3–8] 358
23:7 375, 409
23:8–9 [ET 23:7–8] 358, 412
24:1 394, 415, 416
24:1–4 359
24:3 394
25:5–10 359
26:2 266
26:19 380
27:4 40
27:4–7 197, 199
27:15 356
28:9 380
28:69 394
29:9 377
29:9–11 172
31:9 199, 287, 298
31:10 201
31:10–12 205
31:11 334
31:12 184
31:23 396
32:15–18 356
32:49 161
33:1 200
33:10 291

JOSHUA 34, 140
1:16 406
2:9 200
Chapter 5 280, 282
5:4 [NRSV 4:24] 319
5:9–11 279, 280
Chapters 6–7 162
6:5 211
6:17 403
6:20 211
7:14 135
8:1–29 160
8:30–31 197, 199
9:17 159
9:21 172
9:27 172
Chapter 10 158
14:6 200
18:14 159
18:21 162
18:21–28 159
18:24–25 160
18:25 158
20:6 152
21:17 158
21:18 159
24:15 378
24:25 291

JUDGES 41
Chapter 4 174
Chapters 4–5 167, 175
Chapter 5 169
5:1 185
6:4 369
9:26 320
Chapters 19–21 133
21:17 368
21:23 359

I SAMUEL 41
2:8 405
5:6 357
Chapter 13 160
13:19 174, 177, 203
16:4–13 158
16:18 185

18:6 185
18:6–7 169
18:23 376
18:25–26 359
Chapter 19 160
Chapter 20 202
21:5 343
Chapters 21–22 161
28:6 182
30:25 291

2 SAMUEL 41

1:21 181
2:18 175
3:4 155
Chapter 4 154
5:11 177, 203
Chapter 6 173, 209
6:5 210
Chapter 7 124
7:1–2 159
8:17 286
11:1 289, 346
18:17 155
19:31–39 179
20:11 408
23:28 159
23:31 159
23:36 156

1 KINGS 34, 41, 200

1:1 122
2:7 179
2:26 159
3:4 158
Chapters 5–7 195
5:1–4 235
5:4 [NRSV 4:24] 235
5:15–24 203
5:20 204
5:29 262
Chapters 6–7 203
6:1 207
6:2 [NRSV 6:9] 262
6:37 292
Chapters 7–8 168
7:51 254
Chapter 8 274, 368
8:2 197
8:22 366
8:28–52 368
8:29 329
8:30 392
8:30–39 392
8:38 366
8:49–53 392
8:53 219
8:54 366, 392
8:62–63 273
8:63 273
8:65–66 201
9:20 171, 331
9:20–21 175
9:20–22 171
9:21 175
9:28 339
10:10 339
10:14 339
11:1 393
11:1–4 358
11:8 393
12:27–33 160
14:3 174
14:21 412
14:31 358
Chapter 17 417
18:5 175
18:21 378
22:26 176

2 KINGS 33–34, 41, 139, 142, 200

Chapter 2 417
3:11 290
4:23 202
7:10–11 170
10:15 416
10:21 374
11:1–20 320
12:11 [ET 12:10] 152, 294
13:17 377
Chapter 15 417
Chapters 15–16 173

2 KINGS (*continued*)
15:15 170
Chapter 17 21, 214, 215–16, 218–19, 227, 394
17:3 216
17:5–6 216
17:7–41 216
17:23 227
17:24 227
Chapter 18 224, 233
Chapters 18–20 191
21:10–15 419
21:16 374
21:18 176
Chapter 22 152, 286
22:3 294
22:11 364
Chapter 23 276, 280, 282
23:21–24 280
23:30 356
Chapter 24 137
Chapters 24–25 138, 144, 148
24:13 137, 138, 144
24:13–15 137
24:14 138
24:16 138, 203
Chapter 25 15, 143, 233, 417
25:8 289–90, 292
25:14–15 137, 143
25:18–20 285, 286
25:18–21 198
25:22–24 20
25:22–26 135
25:25 145
25:26 253

ISAIAH 335
1:13 202
6:1 173
6:13 361, 379
7:1–7 223
7:4–8 173
7:6 223
7:8 227
8:19 290
10:8 395
10:20 368
10:28–32 189
15:2 161
15:9 368
22:23 369
28:24 177
30:1 395
Chapter 36 224
Chapters 36–39 191
37:31 368
37:32 368
Chapters 40–55 142
40:4 171, 334
44:12 203
44:28 9, 127
45:1 127
45:1–7 9, 122, 127, 314
45:23–24 366
46:10 395
54:2 369
Chapters 56–66 3, 15, 342, 387
56:1–7 35
56:1–8 378
56:3–5 35
56:6–7 35
58:5 366
59:3 180
60:12–13 342
60:13 313
63:3 180
65:11 156
65:12 366
66:2 365, 396
66:5 365, 396

JEREMIAH 142, 335
1:1 159
2:3 380
6:6 395
7:17–18 382
10:21 290
14:8 394
17:13 394
17:16–29 137
20:1–6 164
21:1 164

23:3 377
Chapter 24 206, 383, 386
24:1–8 142
24:8 377
25:11–12 123, 271
26:20–21 22
Chapters 27–28 141
27:16–22 123
27:16–28:6 263
27:16–28:9 137
27:18–22 137
27:22 138, 141
28:2–4 137
28:4–5 123
29:3 418
29:4 148
29:7 266
29:10 123, 271
31:14 MT [ET 31:15] 160
Chapter 32 159
33:11 185
35:4 170
36:4 38
37:3 173
37:12 135
Chapters 38–39 233
38:1 164
Chapter 39 15, 138
39:5–12 138
40:5–12 20
40:10 206
40:11 190, 357
Chapters 40–41 415, 417
Chapter 41 145, 204
41:17 158
Chapter 43 22
Chapter 44 204
44:15–19 382
44:21 205
49:2 176
49:10 172
49:20 395
49:35 189
50:7 394
51:11 123
Chapter 52 15, 130, 138, 148, 233
52:4 138
52:15 176
52:17–23 137
52:24 285
52:25 356
52:31 272

EZEKIEL 142

1:2 272
3:15 176
8:17 357
11:14–21 206
16:4 231
18:12–13 357
22:18 340
22:20 340
26:16 140
27:21 140
27:24 255
33:23–29 383, 386
33:24 349
33:28 365
36:17 371, 372, 373
37:17 373
Chapters 40–48 140
40:6 290
40:45–47 165
40:46 286, 397
43:18–26 201
44:1–3 140
44:6–14 171
44:10 327
44:15 286, 327
45:13–17 140
45:21–25 140
46:1 202
46:1–3 140
46:4–7 140
46:8–10 140
46:11 140
46:12 140
46:15 202

JOEL

1:4 173
2:25 173

AMOS

4:9 173
5:23 169
6:6 421
Chapter 7 160
8:5 202

OBADIAH

Chapter 17 369

MICAH

5:1 158

HAGGAI 3, 15, 17, 27, 139, 218

Chapter 1 237, 242, 243
1:1 122, 149, 151, 152, 166, 181, 197, 198, 207, 245, 246, 247, 248, 256, 257, 258, 415, 426
1:1–11 246
1:2–4 214
1:3 245
1:12 377
1:14 123, 377
Chapter 2 198
2:1 245
2:2 377
2:3 131, 246, 262, 275
2:3–4 211
2:4 205, 217, 219
2:10 245, 246
2:11 199, 298, 405
2:12–13 416
2:14–19 207
2:18 212
2:20 246, 271
2:20–23 151
2:21 152
2:21–23 246
2:23 149
2:40 356

ZECHARIAH 3, 15, 17, 139, 198, 218, 319

Chapters 1–8 27, 246
1:1 122, 245, 246, 247, 256
1:7 245, 247
2:9 246
Chapter 3 152
3:1 151, 166, 415, 426
3:1–10 201, 273
3:2 369
3:6–10 247
3:7 152
4:1–14 152, 246
4:4–6 151
4:6 336
4:6–10 247
4:8–10 150, 151
4:9 246, 270
4:10 247
4:14 152
5:5–11 329
5:27–41 [ET 6:1–15] 152
6:9–11 132, 246
6:9–15 152, 198, 302
6:10 178, 247
6:10–14 164
6:11 246, 247
6:12–13 246
6:12–15 150
6:14 164
7:1 245, 246, 271, 415
7:1–7 160, 290
7:4 219
7:5 205, 217, 292, 356
8:1–13 247
8:4–5 247
8:6 377
8:11 377
8:12 377
9:12 394
14:15 185
14:16–19 201

MALACHI 15

1:1 38
1:7 180
1:12 180
2:1–5 165
2:4–8 327
2:12 366
3:3 327
3:16 232

PSALMS 368

13:1 208
20:2–6 225
26:7 405
29:11 336
45:2 287
49:11–12 217
Chapter 50 170
50:1 169
69:6 376
69:7 336
69:9 393
71:1 335
71:13 222
Chapters 73–83 170
102:3 334
105:4 336
106:1 210, 211
106:4–5 210
106:30–31 286
106:34–35 361
106:36–37 361
107:1 210, 211
118:1 210, 211
118:29 211
Chapters 120–34 290
127:1 341
136:1 210
137:1 326
150:5 211

PROVERBS

1:8 199, 294
2:16 393
2:16–22 393
6:20 199, 294
Chapter 7 393
14:10 361
20:19 361
24:21 361

JOB

1:6 222
2:13 364
3:5 181
19:15 393

RUTH 378, 381, 387

1:4 359
2:10 393
Chapter 4 358
4:4 204
4:9–13 359
4:11–12 405

LAMENTATIONS 367, 395

4:14 180

ECCLESIASTES

2:8 169, 185
12:3 236
12:12–13 291

ESTHER 7, 12, 260

1:1 122
1:13–15 300
1:19–20 123
2:5 133
2:8 299
2:16 409
3:8 299
3:9 255
4:7 255
4:8 180
5:6 252
7:4 231
8:8 180, 236
8:9 180
8:11 408
9:27 180
14:16 373

DANIEL 314, 388
1:1 144
1:2 138
1:4 330
1:8 180
1:17 330
2:5 266
2:25 272
3:29 265, 266
4:1 232
4:26 232
5:1–4 144
5:2 202
5:13 272
6:3 231
6:8 300
6:14 272
8:25 330
Chapter 9 363
9:1 222
9:4–19 377
9:5–19 367
9:7–8 335
9:16–19 392
9:21 365, 366
9:23 327
9:27 364
10:12 334

EZRA 374, 395
Chapter 1 4, 34, 127, 128, 141, 143, 191, 257, 267
Chapters 1–6 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 128, 130, 150, 190, 191, 219, 229, 238, 242, 253, 254, 275, 282, 315, 347, 390
Chapters 1–10 4, 6, 19, 35, 36, 105–17, 142, 191
Chapters 1–12 20
1:1 122–24, 132, 138, 141, 261, 271, 326, 402
1:1–2 308
1:1–3a 122
1:1–4 4, 5, 9, 12, 121, 122–32, 134, 267, 301, 313, 427
1:1–6 184
1:1–11 5, 121–45
1:1–6:15 5, 34
1:2 124–25, 267
1:2–4 128, 129, 137, 262, 263, 265, 267
1:3 121, 125–26, 129, 130, 141, 217, 267, 283, 290
1:4 125, 126, 131, 134, 136, 186, 267, 350, 359
1:5 123, 132–34, 141, 163, 169, 177, 186, 292, 314, 409
1:5–6 5, 121, 132–36, 191, 215, 288, 300, 314
1:6 7, 134, 186, 403
1:7 137–39, 253, 394
1:7–8 137
1:7–11 5, 24, 121, 123, 134, 136–45, 253, 258, 263, 303, 339, 341, 348
1:8 139–40, 144, 145, 150, 223, 253, 254
1:9 140–41
1:9–10 137
1:10 141, 339
1:11 137, 141, 142, 144, 148, 206, 348
Chapter 2 4, 5, 24, 26, 129, 132, 146, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162–63, 166–

67, 168, 170, 171, 179, 180, 183, 187, 188, 189, 190–91, 192–94, 205, 206, 288, 317, 320, 323, 418, 424, 426
Chapters 2–5 415
Chapters 2–6 131
Chapters 2–10 121
2:1 5, 141, 142, 146, 148–49, 184, 189, 272, 348
2:1–2 150, 176
2:1–2a 146–54, 191
2:1–67 183
2:1–70 5, 146–94
2:2 4, 139, 157, 164, 188, 190, 193, 197, 222, 226, 285
2:2–35 177
2:2a 149–54, 157, 190, 247, 415
2:2b 153, 155, 323
2:2b–19/20 154
2:2b–20 147
2:2b–35 147, 154–63
2:3 155, 319
2:3–15 323
2:3–19 189
2:3–19/20 155
2:3–20 154
2:3–35 163
2:4 155, 175
2:5 155
2:6 155–56, 189, 321, 419
2:7 156, 161, 392, 419
2:8 156, 189, 320, 419
2:9 156
2:10 156, 190, 419, 420
2:11 156
2:11–12 156
2:11–14 322
2:12 156–57, 322
2:13 157
2:14 153, 157
2:15 157, 320
2:16 157, 170
2:17 154, 157
2:18 157–58
2:19 158, 420
2:20 158
2:20–23 154, 158
2:21 158
2:21–28 154
2:21–34 189, 191, 193
2:21–35 147, 149, 154
2:22 158–59
2:23 159
2:24 159
2:25 159
2:26 160
2:27 160
2:28 160–61
2:29 161, 421
2:29–32 154
2:30 161
2:31 161
2:32 161, 165, 419, 420
2:33 162
2:33–34 154
2:34 162
2:35 162–63, 190
2:36 167, 323
2:36–39 147, 151, 163–66, 318
2:36–40 332
2:36–57 305
2:36ff 155
2:37 164, 177, 416
2:38 164, 417
2:39 161, 164–65, 417, 419
2:40 147, 167, 168, 208, 323, 330, 418
2:40–58 147, 166–76, 207

EZRA (*continued*)
2:41 147, 167, 168–69, 185, 210, 418
2:42 147, 157, 167, 170–71, 173, 418
2:43 167, 171–72, 329, 331
2:43–54 167, 331, 332
2:43–58 147, 191
2:44 172
2:45 167, 171, 172–73
2:46 167, 173
2:47 173
2:48 171, 173, 178
2:49 173
2:50 174
2:51 167, 174
2:52 167, 174, 177
2:53 167, 171, 174
2:54 174
2:55 167, 175, 305
2:55–57 147, 167
2:56 167, 173, 175
2:57 167, 175–76
2:58 147, 167, 171, 172, 176
2:59 164, 174, 176–77, 193, 203
2:59–60 424
2:59–63 147, 176–83, 184
2:60 173, 176, 177–78, 181
2:61 175, 178, 179, 345, 351
2:61–63 176, 351, 352
2:62 179–80, 317, 334
2:62–63 177
2:63 181–83, 340
2:64 4, 15, 155, 163, 184–85, 188
2:64–65 146
2:64–69 147
2:64–70 147, 183–94
2:65 147, 167, 169, 185
2:66–67 147, 185
2:67 185
2:68 135, 185–86, 202, 409
2:68–3:1ff 25
2:68–69 147, 191
2:68–70 183, 185, 191
2:69 181, 186–87, 209, 255, 340
2:70 147, 149, 167, 187–88, 190, 305
Chapter 3 4, 133, 163, 186, 188, 191, 195, 196, 199, 201, 202, 203, 204–5, 209, 212, 236, 238, 247, 254, 256, 257, 277
Chapters 3–6 5, 147, 164, 193, 195, 274, 282, 283, 285, 292, 353, 378, 384, 426
3:1 194, 197, 205, 206, 404
3:1a 206
3:1–7 150, 196–206, 256
3:1–13 196–213
3:1ff 190
3:1–4:5 236
3:2 149, 151, 197–200, 207, 210, 274, 275, 285, 291, 292, 396, 399
3:2–3 291
3:2–4 288
3:3 186, 200–201, 205, 217, 278, 355
3:3b 206
3:4 201, 274, 291
3:4a 206
3:4b 206
3:4–5 206, 295
3:4–6a 201

3:5 186, 201–2
3:6 197, 202–3, 206, 215, 290, 292
3:6a 206
3:7 177, 202, 203–4
3:8 174, 207–8
3:8–9 209
3:8–13 139, 144, 151, 196, 206–13
3:9 168, 208–9, 291, 347
3:10 165, 170, 187, 209–10, 212, 215, 292, 331, 332
3:10–11 208, 209
3:10–13 290
3:11 209, 210–11, 213, 292, 314, 370
3:11–13 7
3:12 211–12, 262, 275, 292
3:12–13 404
3:13 212, 213, 215
Chapter 4 4, 15, 21, 31, 40, 150, 195, 196, 213, 214, 219, 221, 222, 223, 232, 238, 239, 241, 242, 243, 246, 247, 255, 256, 271, 279, 281, 304, 309
Chapters 4–5 269
Chapters 4–6 4, 8, 19, 26, 215, 225, 229, 236, 239, 240–41, 242, 257, 259, 268, 300
Chapters 4–7 7, 240
4:1 132, 135, 136, 214, 215, 218, 222
4:1–3 136, 218, 256
4:1–5 200, 205, 214–20, 245, 250, 281, 282, 355
4:1–24 35, 196, 213–43
4:2 214, 215–16, 220, 227, 266, 409
4:2–6 6
4:3 215, 216–17, 219, 384
4:4 200, 205, 217–18, 220, 222, 279
4:4–5 218
4:5 218, 237, 238, 245, 376
4:6 12, 214, 221–22, 223, 237
4:6–7 32
4:6–12 256
4:6–16 214, 218, 220–33
4:6–18 239
4:6–23 219, 238
4:6–24 237, 238
4:7 139, 214, 221, 223–25, 226, 237, 238, 239, 249
4:7–11 239
4:7–16 245
4:7–23 218, 236, 238, 285
4:7–24 247, 256
4:7–4:8 222
4:7–6:18 225, 261
4:8 154, 196, 220, 221, 225–26, 227, 235, 237, 240, 248, 274, 285, 384
4:8–10 221, 222
4:8–11 237, 239, 241
4:8–16 214, 221, 225, 236, 237, 240, 244
4:8–23 24, 154, 238
4:8–24 222
4:8–6:18 24, 229, 238
4:9 225, 226–27, 240, 250
4:9–10 201, 234, 237

EZRA (*continued*)
4:9–11 221
4:10 130, 148, 216, 226, 227–28, 299, 383
4:11 229, 240, 241, 249, 299
4:12 229–30, 250, 261, 300
4:12–16 221
4:13 230, 231, 235, 305
4:14 231–32
4:15 231, 232–33, 235, 256, 301, 310
4:16 15, 233–34, 235, 236
4:17 226, 233, 241, 299, 383
4:17–20 233
4:17–22 233, 238, 240, 243, 256, 259
4:17–23 298
4:17–24 214, 224, 234–43
4:18 224, 233–34, 237, 250
4:19 235, 300, 301, 310, 422
4:20 235
4:21 235–36, 265, 422
4:21–22 233
4:21–23 250
4:22 236
4:23 224, 233, 237, 238, 250, 256, 270
4:23–24 243, 259
4:24 186, 218, 222, 233, 236, 237, 238, 241, 243, 245
4:24–5:1 207, 212
Chapter 5 4, 163, 192, 213, 218, 236, 247, 255, 256, 257, 319
Chapters 5–6 4, 17, 195, 232, 238, 241, 242, 243, 255, 256, 268, 281
5:1 238, 245–47, 270
5:1–2 150, 243, 247
5:1–4 256
5:1–5 245, 250
5:1–17 243–58, 245, 256
5:1–6:18 24, 196, 222, 243–82
5:2 151, 198, 247
5:3 224, 243, 248–49, 252, 253, 256, 263, 422
5:3b–4 252
5:3–4 252
5:3–17 243
5:3–6:15 181
5:4 [NRSV 4:24] 236, 249, 256
5:5 249–50
5:6 224, 250
5:6–7a 245
5:6–10 256
5:6–17 245, 250, 256
5:7 240, 250
5:7–17 26, 257
5:7b–10 245
5:7b–17 245
5:8 8, 244, 247, 250–52, 266, 422
5:9 236, 242, 249, 250, 252, 253, 257, 261, 422
5:9–10 249
5:9–16 244
5:10 236, 252, 257
5:11 252
5:11–16 245, 248, 250, 255
5:11–6:5 9
5:12 233, 252–53

5:13 253, 261, 422
5:13–15 252
5:13–16 139, 257, 258
5:14 139, 150, 181, 202, 248, 253–54, 255, 422
5:14–15 137, 142
5:14–16 141, 144, 150, 245, 257, 348
5:15 254
5:15–16 141, 213
5:16 139, 196, 213, 246, 247, 254, 256, 261
5:16b 258
5:17 6, 7, 232, 245, 250, 255, 256, 301, 310, 422
5:17a 255
5:17b 255
Chapter 6 209, 267, 273
6:1 255, 259–60, 301
6:1–2 259
6:1–5 259
6:1–6 6, 7
6:1–12 243, 256, 258–69
6:2 [NRSV 6:9] 255, 260–61
6:2–5 12, 127, 268, 308
6:3 [NRSV 6:9] 261–62, 268
6:3–4 251
6:3–5 126, 128, 129, 137, 243, 257, 258, 259, 261, 265, 267, 268, 301, 422
6:5 124, 142, 202, 253, 348
6:6 263–64
6:6–7 243, 259, 266, 270, 303
6:6–11 411
6:6–12 259, 269
6:7 181, 250
6:8 8, 250, 252, 266, 422
6:8–10 259, 308
6:8–12 261
6:8–14 402
6:9 269, 273, 302, 304
6:9–10 302
6:10 266, 304
6:11 266, 422
6:11–12a 259
6:12 8, 252, 266, 269, 422
6:12b 259
6:13 8, 252, 256, 263, 270
6:13–15 259, 269
6:13–18 150, 195, 243, 269–75
6:14 150, 238, 250, 269, 270–71, 285, 303, 423
6:14–15 243
6:14–18 212, 229, 243, 246
6:14–22 4, 127, 151
6:15 269, 276
6:15–18 263
6:16 349
6:16–18 269
6:17 177, 265, 269, 272–73, 348, 349
6:18 200, 224, 239, 269, 272, 273–74, 275, 288, 291, 422
6:19 276, 349
6:19–20 142
6:19–21 201
6:19–22 196, 271, 275–82, 346, 351
6:20 253, 277–78
6:21 142, 177, 206, 207, 215, 216, 217, 272, 278–79, 280, 281, 282, 290, 292, 337, 348,

EZRA (*continued*)
355, 384, 409
6:21–22 292
6:21b 281
6:22 34, 134, 212, 214, 279–80, 291
6:23–24 259
Chapter 7 4, 199, 270, 290, 296, 300, 309, 310, 312, 354
Chapters 7–8 27, 28, 283, 341, 388
Chapters 7–9 26
Chapters 7–10 5, 13, 19, 24, 32, 41, 131, 147, 193, 195, 271, 274, 276, 282, 283, 292, 293–94, 314, 315, 316, 336, 353, 354, 365, 378, 383–84, 389, 390, 413, 414, 415, 421, 423, 424, 426, 427
Chapter 7–Neh. 11:2 27
Chapter 7–Neh 13 27, 29
7:1 153, 198, 285–86, 292
7:1–5 24, 152, 163, 165, 284, 292, 342
7:1–6 133, 198, 298, 405
7:1–8:14 283, 284
7:1–10 202, 284–96, 301, 400
7:1–11 24
7:2 286
7:5 286, 324
7:6 27, 34, 134, 200, 284, 286–88, 291, 292, 293, 299, 301, 308, 311, 314, 330, 343, 346, 372
7:6–30 284
7:7 167, 170, 177, 288–89, 292, 305
7:7–9 288
7:8 289, 292
7:8–9 292, 296
7:9 34, 288, 289–90, 292, 342, 343, 345, 346, 354
7:10 284, 288, 290–92, 300, 301, 307, 311, 363, 371, 396, 409, 427
7:11 298, 298–99
7:11–26 284, 292, 296–313, 342
7:12 298, 299–300, 304, 317
7:12–16 297
7:12–20 413
7:12–26 24, 225, 272, 288, 290, 298, 350, 363, 368, 387, 389, 390, 400
7:13 186, 272, 297, 298, 300, 314, 333, 350, 422
7:13–14 308
7:13–15 300, 305
7:13–16 298
7:14 125, 232, 297, 298, 300–301, 303, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311
7:14–16 350
7:15 186, 301–2, 302
7:15–16 298
7:15–20 338
7:15–24 297, 301, 308
7:15ff 338
7:16 186, 298, 301, 302

7:17 8, 252, 266, 300, 302–3, 349
7:17–20 297, 298
7:17–24 298
7:17–26 370
7:18 255, 303, 411
7:19 302, 303
7:19–20 309
7:20 7, 186, 255, 303
7:21 8, 139, 252, 266, 303–4, 422
7:21–22 309, 350
7:21–23 303, 350
7:21–24 297, 298, 303, 349, 350
7:22 265, 298, 303, 304
7:23 304
7:23–24 298
7:24 131, 165, 166, 167, 169, 172, 175, 230, 288, 298, 303, 304–5, 326
7:25 297, 298, 301, 305–7
7:25–26 288, 297, 298, 308, 309, 310
7:26 8, 252, 266, 298, 306, 307–8, 311, 350, 364, 403, 427
7:27 313, 405
7:27–8:14 292
7:27–9:15 24, 292, 313, 314, 316, 390
7:27–28 284, 313–16, 370
7:28 288, 301, 314, 316, 317, 325, 327, 343, 349, 370, 392
Chapter 8 4, 24, 25, 30, 154, 171, 301, 323, 336, 342, 351–52, 354, 388, 400
8:1 180, 317
8:1–14 24, 163, 284, 314, 315, 316–25, 328, 349, 365, 424
8:1–19 277
8:2 150, 286, 317–19, 321, 323, 324, 326, 330
8:2–14 323, 335
8:3 155, 180, 319, 320, 324, 328
8:3–14 318, 323
8:4 155, 320, 324, 417
8:5 319, 320, 321, 324
8:6 157, 320, 324
8:7 156, 320, 324
8:8 155, 320, 324, 417
8:9 156, 321, 324
8:10 150, 291, 321–22, 324
8:11 156, 324
8:12 157, 324
8:13 157, 324, 328, 417, 420
8:13–18 324
8:14 157
8:15 286, 289, 317, 325, 326–28, 334, 342, 346
8:15–18 324
8:15–19 345
8:15–20 130, 316, 325–33, 338, 344, 418
8:15–30 133, 318
8:15–36 283, 325–53
8:16 321, 326, 327, 328, 408, 415, 417, 418, 420
8:17 247, 326, 327, 328–29, 332, 422
8:18 130, 288, 330, 333

EZRA (*continued*)
8:19 330–31
8:20 171, 172, 210, 331–32
8:21 334–35, 336, 366
8:21–23 316, 333
8:21–30 325, 326, 331, 333–45
8:22 288, 334, 335–36, 343, 346
8:23 7, 327, 334, 336, 342
8:24 7, 139, 141, 318, 326, 327, 330, 336–38, 342, 343, 409
8:24b 345
8:24–28 381
8:24–29 277, 333
8:24–30 316, 355
8:25 132, 136, 327, 338, 341, 342, 392
8:25–27 42, 333, 342
8:25–33 140
8:26 7, 327, 338–39, 342, 344
8:26–27 140
8:27 141, 187
8:28 144, 186, 303, 313, 327, 340–41, 343, 360, 380
8:28–29 340
8:29 341, 345, 397
8:30 340, 341–42, 345
8:30–31 338
8:31 288, 289, 326, 327, 342, 343, 345–46
8:31–34 351
8:31–36 325, 345–53
8:32 326, 346
8:32–34 26–27, 345
8:33 168, 178, 183, 345, 346–47, 349, 351, 352, 418
8:33–34 30, 348
8:34 347–48
8:35 142, 177, 265, 273, 280, 345, 348–49, 350, 365
8:35–36 351
8:36 126, 345, 348, 349–50
Chapter 9 4, 24, 32, 279, 283, 316, 336, 353, 354, 355, 356, 360, 368, 370, 372, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 394, 398, 400, 410, 411, 424
Chapters 9–10 24, 25, 27, 28, 34, 35, 177, 206, 279, 283, 301, 306, 316, 318, 337, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 364, 365, 367, 374, 377, 378, 381, 382, 384, 385–86, 387, 388, 389, 390, 392, 394, 396, 399, 402, 403, 410–11, 412, 413, 416, 423, 424, 426, 427
9:1 205, 278, 279, 337, 341, 349, 354–59, 375, 382, 383, 400, 406

9:1–2 34, 35, 200, 201, 278, 282, 343, 344, 353, 354–62, 363, 374, 378, 379, 380, 382, 384, 393, 400, 409, 410, 411
9:1–10:15 387, 409
9:1–15 24, 283, 364, 406
9:2 34, 177, 182, 205, 301, 303, 353, 355, 359–62, 365, 368, 374, 379, 381, 398, 405, 412
9:2–15 357
9:3 364–65
9:3–5 353
9:3–15 354, 362–90
9:4 142, 148, 348, 364, 365–66, 390, 395, 404
9:5 364–65, 366
9:6 335, 364, 366–67, 377
9:6–15 34, 308, 316, 353, 357, 361, 363, 364, 365, 366–67, 368, 389, 416
9:7 363, 367–68, 370, 377
9:7–9 364
9:8 329, 361, 367, 368–70, 376, 378
9:8–9 370
9:9 30, 367, 369, 370
9:10 367
9:10–12 364
9:10–14 364
9:10–15 356
9:11 205, 355, 373, 375, 383
9:11–12 34, 296, 301, 355, 356, 358, 371, 372, 378, 382, 388
9:12 359
9:13 361, 367, 368
9:13–15 376
9:14 361, 368
9:15 314, 361, 364, 368, 377–78, 398
Chapter 10 4, 24, 25, 32, 37, 169, 184, 283, 324, 336, 354, 355, 363, 378, 381, 383, 384, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390–91, 394, 398, 400, 404, 407, 410, 412, 416, 422, 423, 424–25, 426
10:1 184, 377, 382, 391–92, 405
10:1–6 387, 389, 391–400, 402, 410
10:1–15 409
10:1–17 414
10:1–44 283, 313, 390–427
10:2 156, 205, 320, 392–94, 398, 399, 405
10:2–3 419
10:2–4 320
10:2–6 389
10:3 200, 357, 365, 391, 394–96, 398, 399, 404, 406, 407, 412, 416, 425
10:3b 399
10:3–5 398
10:4 396
10:5 396–97, 402

EZRA (*continued*)
10:6 7, 30, 334, 366, 397–98
10:6–8 390
10:7 402
10:7–9 401
10:7–17 391, 400–413
10:7–44 389, 398
10:8 184, 278, 365, 392, 402–3
10:8–44 413–27
10:9 132, 135, 136, 354, 402, 403–4
10:10 19, 168, 393, 404–5, 416
10:10–11 387, 389, 396, 398, 400, 401, 412
10:10–12 410
10:11 205, 278, 313, 393, 397, 405–6, 412
10:12 392, 401, 406
10:12–14 401
10:12–17 387
10:13 406, 407
10:13–14 401
10:13–17 410
10:14 184, 306, 392, 393, 402, 407–8
10:14–16 400
10:14–17 406
10:15 408
10:15–17 401
10:16 278, 300, 343, 355, 400, 409
10:16–17 409
10:16–19 387
10:17 393, 408, 409–10
10:18 393, 414–15
10:18–19 151, 163, 164, 205, 355, 357, 399, 407, 410, 414, 415, 423, 426
10:18–22 163
10:18–23 424
10:18–43 163, 365
10:18–44 24, 191, 391, 409, 410, 414, 420, 425
10:19 415–16, 425
10:20 164, 416–17
10:20–43 421, 423
10:20–44 414, 421, 422
10:21 164, 323, 415, 417, 419
10:22 164, 320, 415, 417–18, 419
10:23 347, 415, 417, 418, 420, 425, 426
10:24 170, 397, 418, 419
10:24–43 424
10:25 155, 418–19, 420, 421
10:25–43 414
10:26 156, 392, 417, 419
10:27 156, 397, 417, 419
10:28 156, 419
10:29 156, 328, 408, 419, 420
10:30 415, 419, 420, 421
10:31[ET30] 415, 418, 419–20, 426
10:32 136, 420
10:33 158, 322, 418, 420, 421
10:34 419, 420
10:34–42 424
10:35 420, 421
10:36 347, 397, 420
10:37 419, 420
10:38 418, 420
10:39 420
10:40 420
10:41 420

10:42 420, 421
10:43 161, 421
10:44 4, 359, 391, 393, 401, 414, 421–23, 424

NEHEMIAH

Chapter 1 369, 390
Chapters 1–2 4, 241, 288
Chapters 1–6 25, 384
Chapters 1–7 20, 121, 131, 132, 134, 193, 195, 209, 212, 229, 236, 271, 274, 283, 353, 354, 378, 423, 426
Chapters 1–13 4, 5, 36, 149, 153, 191, 194
1:1 227, 414, 421
1:1–7:5 5, 24, 26, 197
1:2 19, 417
1:3 130, 148
1:5–11 34
1:6 367
1:7 200
1:8 200
1:8–11 392
1:9 266
1:11 227, 395
Chapter 2 223, 300, 324
Chapters 2–5 236
2:1 153, 404
2:1–8 288
2:6 21
2:8 260
2:9 335, 343, 346
2:10 23, 178, 228, 350, 358
2:11 326, 346
2:11–12 27
2:12 348
2:16 19, 291, 348
2:16a 362
2:18 314
2:20–23 233, 384
Chapter 3 4, 24, 26, 30, 316, 351, 352
3:1 30, 151, 198
3:2 162
3:3 162
3:4 30, 178, 328, 351
3:6 173
3:7 20, 158
3:10 318
3:11 155, 161, 420, 426
3:14 420
3:15 20
3:15–16 210
3:16 149, 153
3:17 156, 226
3:18 209
3:19 20
3:20 156
3:21 30, 178, 347, 351
3:23 136, 415
3:24 209
3:25 155
3:26 172
3:29 164
3:30 328
3:31 420
3:33–34 19
Chapter 4 15
4:1–2 241
4:4 262
4:5 220
4:6 19
4:8 362, 395
4:9 376
4:11 262
4:13 362
Chapter 5 4
Chapters 5–6 4
5:1 19
5:4 230
5:7 362
5:7–8 198
5:8 19
5:13 184, 392
5:14 181

NEHEMIAH (*continued*)
5:15 305
5:17 19
5:17–18 273
Chapter 6 15
6:1 316
6:2 162
6:5–7 229, 241
6:6 19
6:6–7 241
6:10 178, 215, 417
6:11 215
6:14 347, 382
6:18 155, 320, 328, 360, 374
Chapter 7 4, 5, 24, 26, 129, 132, 146, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162–63, 166–67, 172, 179, 183, 186, 188, 189, 190–91, 192–94, 288, 317, 320, 323, 324, 418, 424
Chapters 7–8 324
7:2 260, 417
7:4 130
7:5 180, 184, 188, 191, 194, 362
7:5–72 [ET 7:5–73] 146
7:5–72 205
7:6 142, 188
7:6–7 148, 150, 176, 191
7:6–7a 147
7:6–72 [ET 6–73] 147, 180, 188, 190, 426
7:7 148, 149, 153, 154, 170, 190, 193, 285
7:7b–38 147
7:8 319
7:8–20 323
7:8–24 189
7:9 175
7:10 155
7:11 155
7:11–26 321
7:12 156, 161, 392
7:14 156
7:15 156, 190
7:16 156
7:16–19 322
7:17 156
7:18 157
7:19 157
7:20 157
7:21 157, 170
7:22 157, 158
7:23 157
7:24 157–58
7:25 158
7:25–37 191
7:26 158
7:26–33 158
7:27 159
7:28 159
7:29 159
7:30 160
7:31 160
7:32 160
7:33 161
7:34 161
7:35 161, 419
7:35–38 158
7:36 162
7:37 162
7:38 162, 163, 190
7:39 163, 164
7:39–42 147, 163, 165, 166, 318
7:39–60 305
7:40 164
7:41 164
7:42 161, 164, 419
7:43 167, 168, 208, 330
7:43–60 147
7:44 167, 168, 169, 170, 185
7:45 157, 167, 170, 173
7:46 171, 172
7:46–56 167

7:46–60 191
7:47 172
7:48 173
7:49 173
7:50 173, 178
7:51 173
7:52 174
7:53 174
7:54 174
7:55 174
7:56 174
7:57 175, 305
7:57–59 167
7:58 173, 175
7:59 175
7:60 167, 176
7:61 176
7:61–65 147, 184
7:62 173, 177, 178
7:63 175, 178
7:63–64 351
7:64 179, 180
7:65 181, 182
7:66 15, 146, 164, 184, 188
7:66–72 [ET 73] 147
7:67 167, 169, 185
7:68 185
7:68–70 [ET 69–71] 190
7:69[ET 7:70] 182, 186, 187, 209
7:69–70 186, 187, 255
7:69–71 185, 186, 187
7:69–72 [ET 7:70–73] 185, 191
7:70 186, 187
7:70–73 388
7:70–8.1 25
7:71 [ET 72] 377
7:72[ET 73] 167, 187, 188, 205, 305
7:72–78a 206
7:72b [ET 73b] 190
7:72b–8:1a 197
Chapter 8 4, 5, 19, 24, 25, 27, 32, 34, 37, 144, 197, 199, 201, 204–5, 283, 293–94, 295, 296, 306, 313, 314, 315, 316, 318, 352, 353–54, 388, 389, 390, 396, 399, 403, 414, 418, 424, 425
Chapters 8–10 20, 25, 28, 41, 355, 369, 381, 427
Chapters 8–12 4, 147, 209, 212, 263, 269, 274, 423, 426
Chapters 8–13 5, 121, 132, 134, 275
8:1 34, 200, 349, 400, 404
8:1–9 372
8:1–13a 6, 35, 36, 421, 424
8:1–13:3 5
8:1–18 388
8:2 184, 291, 328, 392
8:2–3 382, 392
8:2–14 324
8:3 291, 328, 334
8:4 158, 415, 420, 421
8:4–17 201
8:5–6 34
8:7 171, 173, 296, 327, 328, 330, 408, 415, 418, 425
8:8 235, 291, 327, 328, 330, 334
8:9 30, 181, 198, 291, 328
8:9–10 405
8:10 272
8:12 212, 327, 328
8:13 135, 330
8:13–18 201, 295
8:14 34, 200
8:15 402
8:16 327
8:17 184, 212

NEHEMIAH (*continued*)
8:18 34, 291, 334
8:35 324
Chapter 9 4, 5, 24, 34, 35, 133, 363, 370, 424
Chapters 9–10 25
9:1 334
9:2 35, 278, 361, 380
9:3 34, 291, 334
9:4 168
9:4–5 168, 208, 330
9:5 168, 418, 426
9:7 422
9:7–8 367
9:8 357, 376, 383
9:10 34, 377
9:10–32 368
9:11–12 406
9:13 291
9:14 200
9:17 370
9:20 330
9:24 205
9:30 205, 355
9:32 34, 377
9:33 367
9:36 370
Chapter 10 4, 5, 24, 34, 35, 193, 199, 263, 303, 324, 418, 423, 425, 426
10:1 188
10:1–30 24
10:2 149, 181, 188
10:3 153
10:4[NRSV 10:3] 164, 417, 420
10:5 318
10:6 161, 164, 347
10:7 [ET 10:6] 318
10:9 417
10:10 208, 209
10:11 [NRSV 10:10] 168, 425
10:13 330
10:14 168
10:15 [ET 10:14] 155, 156
10:16 156
10:17 149, 153, 157
10:18 157
10:20 [ET 10:19] 159
10:21 161
10:25 188
10:26 149, 226, 415
10:27 154, 188
10:28 149, 161
10:29[ET 28] 167, 169, 170, 172, 205, 278, 291, 305, 328, 355, 382
10:29–30 392
10:30 200, 291
10:31[NRSV 30] 205, 217, 423
10:32[ET 31] 205, 217, 199
10:35 199
10:36 199
10:38 168, 397
10:39 165, 186, 255, 286, 324, 341, 397
10:40 397
Chapter 11 4, 17, 24, 132, 135
Chapters 11–13 20, 37
11:1 4, 124, 246, 341, 360, 369, 380
11:1–13:3 5
11:1–19 17, 184
11:2 186
11:3 167, 331
11:4 155
11:5 415
11:7 328, 415
11:9 162, 421
11:10 151
11:10–14 163, 164
11:11 153, 285, 286, 292, 328
11:12 164, 417, 420
11:13 164
11:15–16 347, 417
11:16 408, 418
11:17 174, 419
11:18 4, 5, 124, 246, 341, 360, 369, 380

11:19 170, 171
11:21 172
11:22 169, 419
11:22–23 169
11:24 418
11:31 160
11:32 159, 161
11:33 160
11:34–35 162
11:36 136
Chapter 12 4
12:1 150, 153, 198, 285
12:1–7 163
12:1–26 122, 151, 163, 166, 188, 198, 415
12:3 165, 347
12:6 163, 164, 417
12:6–7 164
12:7 163, 164
12:8 168, 208, 419
12:9 174
12:10 152, 164, 198
12:10–11 164, 415
12:10–26 285
12:12 135
12:15 161, 164, 347
12:18 320, 417
12:19 164, 420
12:21 164, 417
12:22 13, 24
12:22–23 397
12:24 168, 200, 208, 209, 210, 331
12:25 171, 174, 419
12:27 169, 210, 212, 327, 405
12:27–41 209
12:27–43 169, 212
12:28 159
12:28–29 170
12:29 159
12:30 5, 277
12:34 417
12:35 209, 320, 417, 419
12:36 30, 200, 210, 212, 331, 332, 417
12:37 290
12:41 209, 212, 320, 417
12:41–42 415
12:42 417, 420
12:43 34, 212, 382
12:43–44 212
12:44 212, 255, 291
12:45 331
12:45–46 210
12:45–47 169, 170
12:46 170, 210, 331
12:47 165, 286, 324
Chapter 13 4, 390
13:1 184, 200, 334
13:1–3 35, 199, 295, 356, 358
13:3 278, 291
13:4 397
13:4–9 262, 341
13:4–13 327
13:4–31 5, 24, 26
13:5 170, 397
13:6 41
13:6–7 5
13:7 327, 328
13:7–9 275
13:8 397
13:9 397
13:10 169, 332
13:10–13 277, 326
13:11 362
13:13 352, 419
13:14 174
13:15–20 384
13:16 201
13:16–24 203
13:23 19, 393
13:23–25 422
13:23–27 355, 358, 383, 384, 400, 423, 426
13:23–29 407, 423
13:24 225, 393
13:25 359, 364

NEHEMIAH (*continued*)
13:26 358, 393
13:27 393
13:28 198, 423
13:28–30 383
13:29 181
13:29–30 21, 181

CHRONICLES 7, 31, 32–33, 36, 140, 142

I CHRONICLES 378, 387, 417

2:10 140
2:54 159
Chapter 3 319
3:1–5 319
3:3 155
3:17–19 149, 150, 198
3:18 139, 144, 150
3:19 18, 150, 151, 152, 198, 318, 321, 322
3:19–20 150, 321
3:20–21 321
3:21–22 320
3:22 318, 319
3:23 157, 320
3:24 171, 320
4:2 173
4:12 173
4:14 177
4:24 415
4:38 140
4:41 174
4:43 368
5:5 173
5:6 140
5:7 180
5:19 174
5:23 164
5:26 156
5:27–41 [ET 6:1–15] 152
5:28–41 [ET 6:1–15] 284, 285, 292
5:34 286
5:38 286
5:40–41 198, 285, 292
6:1 318
6:16 210
6:29 419
6:31 156
6:35–38 292
6:65 [ET 6:60] 159
7:8 320
7:9 180
7:39–42 155
7:40 140
Chapter 8 158
8:7 173
8:12 162, 417
8:15 417
8:24 156
8:27 417
8:38 173, 417
9:2 171, 331, 332
9:7 162
9:10 164, 166
9:10–13 165
9:12 164, 165, 166
9:16 159
9:17 170, 171
9:17–28 170
9:20 318
9:22 170
9:35–44 158
9:44 173, 417
11:20 322
11:30 159
12:9 337, 338
12:32 [ET 31] 331
13:1 134
13:2 131
13:8 209, 210
15:19 210
Chapter 16 209
16:7 170, 210
16:27 272
16:34 210
16:41 331
17:17 290
21:1 408
22:1–4 203
22:2 203
22:14 339

22:15 174, 203
23:1–4 207
23:3 168
23:3–5 169
23:5 170
23:9 322
23:14 200
23:18 322
23:21–32 330
23:24–27 207
23:28 330
Chapter 24 164
24:1–5 318
24:7 164
24:8 165, 420
24:10 178, 347
24:11 320
24:14 164
24:16 418
25:1 170
25:1–2 170
25:3 210
25:4 417
25:4–7 169
25:6 208, 210
26:3 320
26:10 422
26:25 322
27:16 155
28:17 141, 339
29:1 260
29:7 339
29:19 260

2 CHRONICLES 227, 378, 387, 417

1:2 140
2:2–9 203
3:3 NJPS 262
Chapters 3–4 203
3:17–19 151
3:24 178
4:1 200
5:2 140
Chapters 5–7 274
5:12 209
5:12–13 208
5:13 210
6:35 368
7:3 210, 211
7:3–10 197
7:5 273
7:8–9 201
9:13 339
9:24 185
11:21 359
12:9 255
13:9 205, 355, 356
13:21 359
14:12 369
16:10 200
19:11 307, 417
20:23 408
21:12 124
22:2–23:15 320
23:1 417
23:18 210
23:20–21 356
24:3 359
24:12 203
24:14 202
24:18 367
24:26 417
25:6 339
26:7 174
26:7–8 174
26:8 223
27:5 223
28:10 367
28:15 331
29:5 394, 399
29:7 209
29:12 419
29:16 394
29:25 420
29:26–28 209
29:27–29 202
29:30 170
29:34 277
Chapter 30 276, 277, 279, 280
30:1–5 216
30:5 402
30:6 131, 280
30:15–16 277

2 CHRONICLES (*continued*)
30:16 200
30:16–17 277
30:18 277
30:18–19 279
31:14 126
31:15 320
31:16 319
31:17 207
31:19 331
32:13 205, 355, 356
32:19 303
33:11 233
33:16 405
Chapter 34 152, 276, 286
34:9 216
34:11 203
34:21 131
Chapter 35 276, 277, 279
Chapters 35–36 35, 36
35:6–14 277
35:8 126
35:25 169
Chapter 36 138
36:7 138
36:9 22
36:21 22, 123
36:22 123, 402
36:22–23 122
36:23 123, 124

New Testament

MATTHEW
1:12–13 151

LUKE
3:27 151

PHILEMON
3:5 133

Deuterocanonical Works

TOBIT 7
1:21–22 287
5:1–14 260
14:12 260

JUDITH 6
1:2 260
6:10 161

SIRACH (BEN SIRA) 32, 36, 42, 153
45:23–24 286
49:11–12 151
49:11–13 36
49:13 26, 36, 315

BARUCH
1:8–9 144

2 BARUCH
2:7–9 144
6:9 144

4 BARUCH
3:1–19 144
3:11 144

1 MACCABEES 6
2:26 286
2:54 286
7:37 266
14:41 183

2 MACCABEES 6, 32, 36, 37
1:18–36 26, 36, 315
2:4–5 138
2:13 26, 36, 241, 315
2:23–32 8

1 ESDRAS (*ESDRAS ALPHA*) 3, 6, 31, 32, 35, 155, 157, 186, 194, 195, 203, 208, 214, 222, 229, 234, 235, 271, 285, 307, 315, 317, 353, 354, 365, 388, 395, 414

Chapter 1 36
1:41 138
Chapter 2 36
2:3 125
2:8 133
2:10 138, 139
2:13 140–41
2:14 141
2:15 141
2:16 222, 223, 226
2:16–17 228
2:18 230
2:20 230, 231
2:20–21 232
2:23 233
2:24 233
2:25 226, 234
2:26 234
2:27 235
2:28 236
2:29 236
3:1–5:6 151
Chapters 3–4 143
Chapters 3–5 36
4:44 143
4:47 330
Chapter 5 167
5:3–35 167
5:5 36, 149, 264
5:7 240, 245, 250, 257
5:8 148, 153
5:11 156
5:12 156
5:13–16 156
5:15–16 157
5:16 158
5:17 158
5:19 159
5:20 159
5:21 161
5:24 164
5:26 168
5:27 170, 185
5:28 170
5:29 171, 172
5:33 175
5:36 177
5:38 179, 180
5:39 180
5:40 32, 182, 183
5:41 146, 184
5:42 185
5:43 185
5:44–45 186
5:45 187
5:46 188
5:50a 278
5:50b 278
5:52 202
5:54 337
5:55 204
5:56 247
5:56–73 245
5:58 209
5:66–73 214
5:68 217
5:72 217
5:73 218
Chapter 6 271
6:1 245
6:3 248
6:4 249
6:5 250
6:8–9 250, 251
6:14 252
6:15 252
6:18 151, 253
6:18–19 141, 144
6:19 254
6:19–22 271
6:23 260
6:23–34 259
6:24 261, 262
6:27 151, 264
6:27–28 263
6:29 265
6:32 266
7:2 270
7:3 270
7:4 270
7:5 271
7:8 271
7:9 273
7:11 273, 277
7:12 277, 278

1 ESDRAS (*continued*)
7:13 278
8:2 286
8:4 288
8:7 291
8:9 299
8:10 300
8:11 300
8:12 301
8:17 303
8:19 304
8:21 304
8:24 308
8:25 313
8:26 314
8:27 314
8:28 317
8:29 318, 319
8:32 320
8:34 322
8:35 321
8:39 323
8:40 323
8:42 328
8:44 328
8:45 329
8:46 329
8:48 331
8:49 331
8:50 334, 335
8:51 336
8:52 336
8:53 336
8:54 337, 338
8:55 338
8:57 340
8:60 341
8:61 345, 346
8:64 347, 350
8:65 348
8:66 349
8:69 355, 356, 359
8:70 361
8:71 366
8:78 369
8:79 369, 370
8:80 370
8:81 370, 371
8:83 373
8:86 376
8:87 376
8:88 377
8:91 392
8:92 393, 394
8:93 394, 395
8:94 395, 396, 399
Chapter 9 421, 424
9:4 403
9:6 404
9:8 405
9:12 407
9:13 408
9:14 408
9:16 409
9:21–35 424
9:30 419
9:34 420
9:36 391, 414, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425
9:37 372
9:37–54 354
9:37–55 424

2 ESDRAS 37, 39, 145, 183, 285, 296, 315
Chapters 1–2 37
2:42–48 37
Chapters 3–14 37, 39
Chapter 14 40
14:21 37
Chapters 15–16 37

4 MACCABEES
4:17 339

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

AHIKAR 314, 388
1:1 287

ENOCH
1:1 287
Hab. Mul. 1.3 3

4 EZRA
See 2 Esdras

5 EZRA 37

6 EZRA 37

Ancient Translations of the Bible

SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH 7, 21, 40, 327

SEPTUAGINT (LXX) 6, 19, 31, 32, 35, 37, 45, 123, 125–26, 132, 134, 138–41, 144, 148–49, 155–56, 163, 167–68, 170–71, 175–76, 179–86, 199–200, 208–9, 211, 215, 217, 222–27, 229–37, 248–51, 253–55, 259–63, 266, 270–71, 278, 280, 289, 299, 301–4, 306, 313–14, 317, 319–23, 327–31, 337–42, 345, 350, 354–56, 359–62, 364, 366–73, 375–77, 379, 393–95, 397, 399, 404–6, 408–10, 414, 416, 418–24

VULGATE 7, 33, 35, 37, 235, 289

Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

QUMRAN LITERATURE 7, 327

1QIsa 361
4Q381, fragment 46 373
4QEzra 32
4QMMT B81 379
4QMMT N75 379
CD 9 301
CD 16–23 301
IQDS 6.20 301
IQIs 379
IQS 6.12 301

Inscriptions and Other Ancient Sources

AL YAHUDU TABLETS 324, 325, 326

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TEXTS RELATING TO THE OLD TESTAMENT (*ANET*)

29 216
282 124
284 228
284–87 21, 216
287–88 233
291 233
301 233
315, lines 31–35 138
315–16 124
563–64 233

ASSYRIAN LETTER

563–64 233
BM ND2773 223

BEHISTUN INSCRIPTION

12, 14, 174, 218, 253, 299, 300

line 1 299
line 50 124
line 67 266
lines 2, 5, 31, 46 260
lines 68–69 300
par. 32 266

BEIT BIRAM TABLETS 325

CYRUS CYLINDER 9, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 138, 142, 253, 263, 267
line 20 317
lines 15–18 9
lines 31–33 9

DEMOTIC CHRONICLE, BN 215 C.6–16 311

ESARHADDON'S PRISM B 233

GADATAS INSCRIPTION 265, 305

JUDEAN TABLETS 324

MURASHU TABLETS 9, 23, 123, 192, 230, 237, 287, 326

PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION TABLETS 224
353 251
354 251
2018.21 153

SENNACHERIB'S PRISM 233

UDJAHORRESNET INSCRIPTION 181
line 20 266
line 30 311

XANTHUS INSCRIPTION 311
IV.II.11–18 305
line 19 307, 312

Papyri

AMHERST 63 PAPYRUS 225, 239

ELEPHANTINE PAPYRI 374
Cowley 8.29 319
Cowley 8.7 319
Cowley 9.17 319
TAD A 4.1 // Cowley 21 293
TAD A 4.1.1 // Cowley 21 223, 265, 276, 280, 307
TAD A 4.1.6 // Cowley 21 277
TAD A 4.1.10 // Cowley 21 417, 419
TAD A 4.5 // Cowley 27 14
TAD A 4.6 // Cowley 38 293
TAD A 4.7 // Cowley 30 13, 15, 19, 21, 23, 218, 229, 239, 241, 251, 266, 268, 294, 311, 329, 383
TAD A 4.7 // Cowley 30, lines 9–11 203
TAD A 4.7 // Cowley 30, lines 10–12 275
TAD A 4.7.1 // Cowley 30 17, 153, 155, 250, 260, 266, 272
TAD A 4.7.1–2 // Cowley 30 14
TAD A 4.7.2, 27–28 // Cowley 30 124
TAD A 4.7.5 // Cowley 30 266
TAD A 4.7.5–6 // Cowley 30 131
TAD A 4.7.11 249
TAD A 4.7.13–14 // Cowley 30 22, 252
TAD A 4.7.18 // Cowley 30.18 266, 322, 397, 419
TAD A 4.7.18–19 // Cowley 30.1 22, 30, 224

TAD A 4.7.25 // Cowley 30 302
TAD A 4.7.25–26 261, 266
TAD A 4.7.29 // Cowley 30 22, 178, 383
TAD A 4.7.30 248
TAD A 4.8 // Cowley 31 22, 239, 268, 294
TAD A 4.8.1 // Cowley 31 153
TAD A 4.8.12–13 // Cowley 31 252
TAD A 4.9 // Cowley 32 22, 153, 226, 226–27, 228, 239, 243, 261, 268
TAD A 4.9.1–2 261
TAD A 4.9.8–9 // Cowley 32 265
TAD A 4.10 // Cowley 33 239, 261
TAD A 4.10.3 // Cowley 33 417
TAD A 6.1.3 235
TAD A 6.2 // Cowley 26.2 223
TAD A 6.2.4–13 // Cowley 26 255
TAD A 6.2.23 // Cowley 26 214, 26
TAD A 6.5 // Driver 1 236
TAD A 6.8 236
TAD A 6.9 298
TAD A 6.10 236
TAD A 6.11 231, 236
TAD A.9.2 254
TAD B 2.1.5 // Cowley 5 247
TAD B 2.1.16 // Cowley 5 248
TAD B 2.1.17 // Cowley 5 417
TAD B 2.3.24 227
TAD B 2.3.31 // Cowley 8 417
TAD B 2.5 415, 425
TAD B 2.6 // Cowley 15 355, 358, 412, 415, 425
TAD B 2.7.6–7 // Cowley 13 264
TAD B 2.8.1.14 // Cowley 14 264
TAD B 2.8.6 // Cowley 14 264
TAD B 2.8.11 // Cowley 14 264
TAD B 2.9.9–11 // Cowley 20 264
TAD B 2.11 // Cowley 28 185
TAD B 2.22 // Cowley 6.22 264
TAD B 3.3 // Kraeling 2 355, 358, 412
TAD B 3.3.1 // Kraeling 2 122
TAD B 3.3.2// Kraeling 2 131
TAD B 3.5.2// Kraeling 4 131
TAD B 3.3.7 // Kraeling 2 394
TAD B 3.8 415, 425
TAD B 3.8.4 // Kraeling 15 359
TAD B 3.8.15 // Kraeling 15 359
TAD B 3.8.25 // Kraeling 15 359
TAD B 3.10.17 // Kraeling 9 262
TAD B 4.2.3 // Cowley 11.7 254
TAD B 4.4.21 // Cowley 2.21 320
TAD B 6.3.11–12 // Kraeling 5 262
TAD B 6.4.5 // Cowley 18.5 320
TAD C, p. 72 192
TAD C 1.1, line 101 240
TAD C 3.4.7 174
TAD C 3.7, column 2.1 230
TAD C 3.13 143
TAD C 3.15 // Cowley 22 23, 170, 184, 192, 246, 317, 411
TAD C 3.15, lines 123–28 193
TAD C 3.15, lines 136–38 193
TAD C 3.15.83 // Cowley 22 322
TAD C 3.15.88 // Cowley 22 322
TAD C 3.15.106 // Cowley 22 322
TAD C 3.15.129 192
TAD C 3.15.132 192, 193
TAD C 3:28 // Cowley 81 317
TAD C 4.5.6 // Cowley 19 417
TAD D 2.1.19 173
TAD D 7.6.9–10 276, 280
TAD D 7.24.15 235
TAD D 7.24–25 276, 280
TAD D 7.33 240
TAD D 7.57.5 156
TAD D 8.12.5 171
TAD D 9.10.1 173

SAMARIA PAPYRI AND BULLAE 21, 383

WADI DALIYEH PAPYRI 228
4.1 260

ZENON PAPYRI 223

Aramaic Documents from Ancient Bactria (*ADAB*) 9, 224, 226, 231, 249

A6.1 // Khalili IA.5 25
A8 230

Premodern Jewish Sources

RABBINIC SOURCES

B. Bat.
14b–15a 32
15a 38
Genesis Rabbah
71:4 172
Kethuboth
24b 182
Moed Katan
16a 403
Pirkei Avot
1.1 38, 427
4:10 236
Pirkei Hechalot
27 38
Qam
82 38
Qiddushin
69b 182, 327
70a 174
Ruth Rabbah
2.9 358, 375
Sanh
11a 38
21b 38, 291, 296
93b 32
93b 38
Song of Songs Rabbah
5:5 287
Taanit
12b 366
Tosefta Sotah
9.2 270
Yebam
89b 403
96b 327
Yoma
9b 125
21b 182

JEWISH-GREEK SOURCES

Josephus 36–37, 195, 214, 223, 229, 354, 388

Jewish Antiquities
II.xiv.6–xv.1 // II.311–17 281
III.12.6 // 3.291 209
III.214 182
III.218 183
IV.311 183
XI. 91–95 145
XI. 136–38 353
XI. v.1–5 // XI.120–58 36
XI.2.1 // XI.19 223
XI.2.1 // XI.26 226
XI.5.1 175
XI.7 154
XI.11 145
XI.21–23 230
XI.68–69 // XI.iii.10 194
XI.84 218
XI.84–89 214, 216
XI.87 216
XI.88 217
XI.97–99 259
XI.142 // XI.v.3 364
XI.143 // XI v.3 366
XI.153–54 // XI.v.4–5 354
XI.i.1–18 // XI.1–20 36
XI.i.2 131
XI.i.3 132
XI.i.3 // XI.10–11 143
XI.ii.1–2 // XI.16–33 36
XI.iii.1–8 // XI.29–63 151
XI.iii.1–10 // XI.34–69 36
XI.iii.10 146, 153
XI.iv.1–9 // XI.73–123 36
XI.iv.3 // XI.84–85 215
XI.iv.4 // XI.92–94 151
XI.iv.6 // 99–103 261
XI.iv.6 // XI.97–104 259
XI.iv.7 // XI.105 270
XI.iv.7 // XI.107 272
XI.iv.7 // XI.108 273
XI.v.1.121 // XI.v.1 285
XI.v.2 // XI.131 313

XI.v.3 // XI.142 387
XI.v.4 // 151–52 424
XI.v.4/ XI.153 423
XI.v.5 // 151–58 414
XI.v.6–8 // XI.159–83 37
XI.vii.1–2/297–312 181
XI.viii.3 // XI.315 37
XI.v.v // XI.154 424
XV.xi.1–6 275

Philo of Alexandria
On the Special Laws 2
27.149 281
28.150 281

LATER JEWISH SOURCES

Al Qirqisani 40
Malbim 39, 169, 299, 322, 408
Mezudath David (Rabbi David Altschuler) 39, 320, 322, 327, 408
Moshe Kimhi 38
Pseudo Ibn Ezra 38, 130, 131, 148, 150, 168, 175, 177, 181, 183, 188, 319, 321, 340, 342
Pseudo Rashi 38, 130, 131, 145, 169, 172, 180, 182–83, 211, 262, 278, 308, 319, 322, 327, 340, 408
Saadiah Gaon 38

Greek and Roman Literature

ARISTOTLE

Athēnaīn Politeia
25.1–2 404
26.3 411
41.2 404
42 317

ARRIAN

Anabasis
III.16.7 255, 260

CICERO

Epistulae ad Atticum
414.4 [16.6.4] 25
De senectute
3 25

DIODORUS SICULUS

16.40.2 263
XII.4.4–5 12
XV.90–93 241
XVI.47 154

HERODOTUS 289

Historiae
1.110 260
I.86–90 127
I.110 139
II.1–32 12
III.1–67 12
III.31 300
III.62 123
III.64 260
III.68–IV.4 12
III.71 300
III.76 300
III.83–87 300
III.89–92 230
III.90–94 350
III.91 304, 305, 339
III.91.1 228
III.153 260
III.159 266
VII–VIII 222
VII.5–IX.122 12
VIII.89 228
VIII.98 335

PLUTARCH
Agesilaus
15.6 186
Lives
"Artaxerxes" 1.1 12
Pericles
37.3–4 411

POLYBIUS 388
Historiae
1.1.3 315
1.20.1 315
1.21.1 315
36.12 25, 26

THUCYDIDES 9
History of the Peloponnesian War
1.1.20–22 315
1.22 310
2.70 315
8.97 404
I.22 8, 25, 30
VII.7 12

XENOPHON 9
Anabasis
1.3.21 187
1.9 335
II, 1.7 123
Cyropaedia
8.6.22 260
Hellenica
3.4.11 231
3.4.15 231
Kyropaideia 127
Memorabilia
3.4 208
Oeconomicus
8.3 208
The Persian Expedition 13

Early Post-Biblical Christian Sources
CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA
Stromateis
1.127.2–3 39
1.127.123–24 39
1.127.149 39

IRENAEUS
Adversus haereses
3.21.2 [24.1] 39

JEROME 32, 296

JUSTIN
Dialogus cum Tryphone
72.1 39

Islamic Sources
AL-JUWAYNI 40

AL MAQDISI 40

IBN HAZM 40

QUR'AN
Sura 5.44 40
Sura 9.30 40

Samaritan Chronicles (*Sepher haYamin*) 40